

THE BUFFALO BILL



A WEEKLY PUBLICATION

STORIES

DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y.

No. 248

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 10, 1906.

Price, Five Cents

BUFFALO BILL'S CREEK QUARREL OR LONG HAIR'S LONG SHOT



BY THE AUTHOR
OF
"BUFFALO BILL"

As Buffalo Bill was crossing the narrow plank, the chief of the Creeks chopped frantically at it with his sharp-edged tomahawk. The border king turned and fired at him.



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Beware of Wild West imitations of the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are about fictitious characters. The Buffalo Bill weekly is the only weekly containing the adventures of Buffalo Bill, (Col. W. F. Cody), who is known all over the world as the king of scouts.

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BUFFALO BILL'S CREEK QUARREL;

OR,

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By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I. IN YELLOW BEAR'S VILLAGE.

More than a hundred lodges were ranged on either side of a crystal brook, which ran slowly through a little valley after it had dashed for leagues through dark chasms and down from lofty cliffs.

These lodges told of the power of Yellow Bear, chief of the Creeks; for this was his own village, and the dwellers in the lodges were but a small part of his warlike tribe.

Prominent among the lodges was the large one in which he dwelt when in the village. In front of it, on a tall lance, floated a pennon of yellow cloth, with a bear rudely drawn upon it, which told all strangers, who knew him only by his fame, that they were in the village of Yellow Bear.

There were many warriors idling about in groups, while women were busy about the camp-fires, cooking, for it was near to the time for the noonday meal.

A large drove of horses fed in the valley, watched by three or four mounted warriors and a large party of half-grown boys.

Suddenly a woman came out from the lodge of the chief. She was tall in stature and wore a head-dress of feathers that made her look still more lofty. A robe of scarlet cloth was wound about her fine figure, and she stepped with the air of one born to command.

She was not a white woman, but her complexion was very light for an Indian. That was not strange, for she had been born in the far Northwest of one of those inter-racial marriages so common since the great fur companies sent out their daring voyagers and trappers to live a savage life for the gain of their shareholders.

Her look was haughty and commanding, and she was not devoid of beauty, although the freshness of youth had left her.

Close behind her came two other women. One was an old, haggard creature, with one eye gone, while the

other shone out from its sunken socket like a ball of fire. Her coarse, white hair hung loose over her bare, shrunken neck and bony shoulders.

The other—the strangest of the three—was very young and very beautiful. She was a white girl, with rich, curling hair of almost golden hue, and blue eyes and regular features. Yet she was dressed in the Indian style—a short skirt of cloth, fringed with fur; leggings of fawn skin, and moccasins worked curiously with stained porcupine quills. A scarlet blanket over her shoulders did not entirely conceal her round, white arms or her graceful neck. Her head was bare, but she wore twisted in her rich tresses the single eagle's feather that proclaimed she was a chief's daughter, and unmarried.

The contrast between her and the one-eyed hag at her side could not possibly have been greater. One looked to be seventy or eighty years old, while the other could not, at most, have been over eighteen; one looked the exact personification of the popular idea of a witch, the other not unlike the houris of the Moslem's Paradise.

The tall and queenly looking woman who had first stepped out stood for a moment outside of the lodge of Yellow Bear. She glanced up and down the valley, and then she turned to the young girl.

"Wanda, the Queen of the Creeks, will now listen to the vision of Dreaming Flower," she said. "Then she will ride up to the hill-top to look for Yellow Bear, her chief and the father of Dreaming Flower."

"He is not my father. The Spirit of Dreams came to me, and told me that the skin of my father was white, like my own. He told me, too, that I have a mother as beautiful as the flowers I love to pluck for my garlands, and as good as she is beautiful."

"The Spirit of Dreams has been speaking lies to the Dreaming Flower. No father but Yellow Bear can claim a smile from her, nor shall any but Wanda call her daughter."

The one-eyed hag muttered something, but neither Wanda nor the girl understood what she said.

The eyes, blue as they were, of the young girl, flashed out a haughty look at the queenly looking woman who stood before her, and she said:

"The Great Spirit will not lie. The Dream Spirit is his angel, and he, too, must speak true words with a single tongue. I have heard Yellow Bear say that this is so."

"Yellow Bear has said foolish things, and he has dreamed bad dreams. He dreamed that he must go to the land of his enemies—to the hunting-grounds of the Sioux—to steal for himself a new wife. It was a bad dream. I told him he would come back as he went—empty-handed. And he will. Were he to bring a strange wife here, the knife of Wanda should drink her blood. But this is not your dream. My ears are open to hear it."

The young girl was about to speak, when a warrior,

who had been looking away to the southeast, uttered a shrill shout.

In an instant every eye in the village was attracted, first toward him, and then to a pillar of white smoke which rose suddenly above the hill-tops in that direction.

In silence they looked for a few seconds, and then it went out of sight. They still looked and waited in silence, Wanda as quiet as the rest.

Then again the white column rose to view. Then it faded away, and a third time it came in sight.

Wanda put her hand to her belt, and took out a whistle made from the tip of an antelope's horn. This she blew with a loud, shrill call, which could be heard far up and down the valley.

In a second the warriors were rushing to their lodges to arm themselves, while the guards in charge of the horses drove the herd in where the animals could be occoutered for use.

Wanda herself disappeared inside of the large lodge for a few minutes. When she came out she was clad in a short skirt, a hunting jacket of fur, and her legs were encased in leggings, while she carried a gun in her hand and wore a knife and pistol in her belt.

When she came forth she cried out to the already assembled warriors:

"Yellow Bear has called for help. Wanda will go at the head of the braves who answer his signal."

A yell of applause broke from every lip as Wanda spoke, and a young brave led a large, cream-colored horse, with mane and tail of jet-black hue, up for her use. It was instantly bridled and saddled.

Before she mounted, Wanda turned to the one-eyed hag, and said:

"Evil Eye, keep thy one eye wide open! Dreaming Flower dreams too much. She is under thy care while we are gone. Forget it not."

The old hag answered in a hoarse, croaking voice:

"The Dreaming Flower will not go out of the sight of Evil Eye."

Wanda said no more, but springing with an agile bound astride the noble horse which two braves could hardly hold, she waved her rifle in the air, and, with a shrill cry, dashed away at a swift gallop to the southeast—the direction in which the smoke signals had been seen.

The warriors, in a single column, followed at the same pace.

Dreaming Flower gazed after them for a moment, and then reentered the lodge.

The one-eyed hag hobbled in after her, muttering to herself as she went.

An instant later a young brave, who until now had not come into the foreground, came up in front of the lodge. Looking cautiously around, as if to see whether any one was near to notice his actions, he advanced to the shield

which hung upon the center-pole and made three marks upon it with a piece of charcoal.

One was the sign of an arrow-head, the next a square, the third the rude resemblance of a tree.

Then he uttered a cry like that made by a hawk when, circling in the air, it looks for prey; and instantly hurried away.

He had not been gone a half-minute before Dreaming Flower hurried from the lodge, glanced around, and looked at the shield.

"A letter to me from the strange friend, left in the hollow tree," she murmured, as she looked at the marks. Then she brushed them away with the palm of her hand.

The next second, the one-eyed hag hobbled out, and glared suspiciously at the girl through her one blazing orb.

"What did the Dreaming Flower come out of the lodge so quickly for?" asked Evil Eye.

"Because she wanted to. Dreaming Flower is no slave to be told to come and go by another. She is as free as the wind that whispers among the trees. She will come and go as her will tells her to."

"Not while Wanda and Yellow Bear are away will the Dreaming Flower go out of the sight of Evil Eye," said the hag.

"We will see!" cried Dreaming Flower angrily.

She blew a small whistle made from the slender bone of an antelope's fore leg. The call brought into her presence the young warrior who had made the mark on the shield.

"Red Plume will saddle his horse and mine. Dreaming Flower wants to ride in the fresh air of the hillsides," said the girl.

"Saddle a horse, too, for Evil Eye!" cried the old hag.

"Let it be one-eyed, and lame, like herself," said Dreaming Flower scornfully.

"Fool!" screamed the hag. "I will make you weep bitter tears for those words when Wanda returns."

Dreaming Flower laughed to see her one eye blaze with furious light. She had good cause to hate Evil Eye, who had been harsh and cruel to her, so far as she had the power, ever since she could remember.

The young warrior hurried off to get the horses.

CHAPTER II.

CAPTURED AND RECAPTURED.

The fire of anger shone in the eyes of Dreaming Flower when Red Plume returned, bringing not only her horse and his own, but another fine animal, noted for spirit and speed, for the use of Evil Eye.

"Ho!" cried the old woman. "The Dreaming Flower sees how Red Plume obeys her wishes. He knows his

duty to Wanda too well to anger me. Look at the horse he brings! It is neither one-eyed nor lame. Now Dreaming Flower may ride, but Evil Eye rides with her."

Dreaming Flower did not answer. But her face flushed as Red Plume led the horses up, and her looks told him of her displeasure.

"Evil Eye should take her blanket. It will be cold on the hills," said the young warrior.

"Red Plume is good. He cares for the feelings of the old," replied the hag. And she went into the lodge to get a blanket.

"Why did Red Plume disobey me?" asked Dreaming Flower angrily, as soon as the other was gone.

"That she might be alone in her ride with Red Plume, who would die to render her services," replied the young Indian. "Be still, and watch. You will soon see why Red Plume brought that horse for Evil Eye!"

Evil Eye came out, wearing the long robe of scarlet cloth which Wanda had laid aside, and Red Plume instantly assisted her to mount the horse which he had saddled and bridled for her.

The old hag looked surprised at receiving such attention—something very unusual for an Indian to pay to a woman, especially an old one. When mounted on the restive steed, she turned to the girl.

"Evil Eye is ready," she said. "Red Plume can now attend to you."

At that instant, Red Plume dexterously slipped one of the broad pods of the prickly pear, full of thorns, under the saddle of the horse which Evil Eye rode, and the animal, feeling the keen torture, darted forward at uncontrollable speed.

Dreaming Flower saw the action. As the horse darted away, with Evil Eye clinging to its back, and tugging helplessly at the bridle, she understood the design of Red Plume; and, but for the laughter which overcame her, she would have thanked him.

She could hardly mount the horse which Red Plume held for her. She was watching the red cloak of Evil Eye fluttering far down the valley, as the horse rushed madly on.

When she was mounted, she turned to Red Plume, and said:

"It was good in Red Plume to get that old witch out of my way. I hate her."

"Red Plume would die to serve Dreaming Flower. She is as far above him as the moon that walks among the stars, but he can look at her and be happy."

"Red Plume is very good, but he must be careful and not show that he cares for Dreaming Flower. Yellow Bear will kill any one who looks on her with eyes of love, as he did the noble white captive whom he spared so long, that he might teach Dreaming Flower how to read the speaking papers and to write, so that she could

read the news to Yellow Bear when he captured the mailbags of the palefaces. Does not Red Plume remember?"

"Yes, the paleface prisoner was killed by Yellow Bear in his passion, because the chief found him kneeling at the feet of the beautiful Dreaming Flower."

"Yes," said Dreaming Flower, with a sigh. "I was sorry, though I felt no love for him. But this stranger who writes to me in such beautiful words interests me. I might love him."

"Why? Dreaming Flower has never seen him. He is a mystery, like the sounds we heard in the forest when the storm is near-by."

The young Indian spoke eagerly, and seemed to wait an answer with impatience, for he urged his horse up by the side of hers, and looked into her face as they rode on.

"The mystery is to me a delight," she said. "He writes, and says he loves me. He tells me that he has seen me when I did not know he was near; that he will never be far from me; that he will watch over me if danger should approach; that he will read my wishes, and carry them out when I least expect it."

"Three letters, all left in some mysterious way, and signified in the same strange manner, have reached my hands."

"And now I go for the fourth. Had Evil Eye ridden with us, I could not have got it. But I know I can trust Red Plume. He has been my playfellow ever since I can remember."

"He will be true to Dreaming Flower while he lives," said the young Indian, "and, though he may dare to love her, he will hide his passion, and not be rash, as was the paleface who lost his life."

"That paleface was your friend, Red Plume?"

"Yes, he was my friend because I love to serve Dreaming Flower. But in his hour of doom, Red Plume could not raise a hand or speak a word to save him. The anger of Yellow Bear is like that of the storm. The lightning comes and kills before the voice of warning is heard."

"The paleface died. He left but two friends to mourn him. One was Dreaming Flower; the other was Red Plume."

"True. Halt here, Red Plume, and watch, lest some one sees me, while I go on and see if there is a speaking paper in the hollow tree."

They were now on the edge of a thick grove on the hillside, and, while Red Plume reined in his horse, as she requested, the girl rode on by herself to an old tree, which had been blasted by a thunderbolt years before, and now stood, dead and leafless, among its mates.

Into a small hollow, as high as she could reach while sitting on her horse, she thrust her small white hand, and brought out a roll of thin white bark. This she unrolled. It was covered with writing, done in a plain,

legible hand, so like that of her paleface teacher that she could read it readily.

Not only the writing but the language was like his; and she could have fancied that these letters came from him, had she not seen him perish with her own eyes.

He was dead, beyond a doubt; but these letters were almost a transcript of those which he had written to her while he lived.

Dreaming Flower sat motionless on her horse, reading the letter, while the young warrior, with a pleased look on his face, watched her.

It seemed strange, too, that he, who by his actions and words had professed to love her, should be gratified when he knew that she was reading fervid declarations of love from another.

Such was the case, however. A smile stole over his face when he saw her kiss the letter and then place it in her bosom.

He was about to ride up to join her, when he heard a sudden crashing in the branches and underbrush near-by. The next instant, he saw the forms of a score or more of mounted, painted warriors breaking through the forest at wild speed, and riding directly toward her.

"Fly, fly!" he shouted, as he dashed forward to put his own body between her and peril. "Fly! The Sioux! The Sioux!"

Armed only with a spear, with not even a shield to guard his breast, the young brave dashed on, while Dreaming Flower, apparently panic-stricken, did not even urge her horse into action until it was too late; for, as she saw the lance of Red Plume broken, and himself made prisoner, she found her own horse seized by a couple of warriors.

A third, evidently a chief, by his dress and arms, rode to her side.

"Who is this?" he asked, in the Shoshone tongue, understood by almost all the tribes, and used by them as a common means of communication with one another. "She is dressed like the red maidens, but her skin is white and her eyes are blue."

"She is your captive. Is that not enough? Let him go," said Dreaming Flower sadly, and she pointed to Red Plume, who was held firmly between two strong warriors.

"You ask liberty for him, and not for yourself? He is not your brother. Is he your husband?"

"No. I am the slave of no man. I ask nothing for myself. I am a woman, and weak. I can die, and that is enough for me."

"You are too beautiful to die."

The Sioux chief rode a little apart, and conferred with all of his warriors, except four left to guard Dreaming Flower and Red Plume.

From time to time, they looked upon her while they

talked, but in their looks there was more of respect than any other feeling.

After a short while, the young chief—evidently a sub-chief, out on some independent expedition—rode back to the side of Dreaming Flower, and said:

"I am Young Beaver, one of the minor chiefs of the Sioux. The White Flower and the young Creek brave must go with us, and remain in our hands till we meet Kicking Horse, our great chief. We will not hurt you, but you must go with us."

Dreaming Flower bowed her head, and allowed the young chief to take the bridle of her horse in his hand. Red Plume rode next to her, and thus, keeping out of sight of the village, they skirted the hills, and rode eastward, in the very direction which Wanda, with her warriors, had taken.

The party was too small to dare to keep in the open valley, where it might be discovered by a larger one, and Young Beaver was evidently a cautious warrior, for he kept to the hill range, though he could not there travel as fast as he would otherwise have done.

He was not aware, perhaps, that he had got completely over into the hunting-grounds of the Creeks, or he would not have been so venturesome; for this was in the height of the hunting season, when almost the whole of the nation were on the hunt.

He rode on swiftly, until night was close at hand, and then, passing the crest of a ridge, he saw before him a well-watered valley, where he could find good camping-ground for the night.

He halted on the ridge a little while, to scan the valley, and see if it showed any signs of other parties of Indians. Then, observing nothing to alarm him, the young chief dashed swiftly down the hillside, with his men and the two captives, so as to reach the camping-ground before darkness came on.

Reaching the valley, which seemed strangely scarce of game, they crossed it at a gallop, and entered a grove of cottonwood trees on the river bank.

Young Beaver leaped from his horse, and turned to help Dreaming Flower to alight.

As he did so, yells from fully a hundred warriors broke upon his ears, and, before he and his braves had a chance to raise a weapon, more than half of their number were stricken down in death, while the rest were made captives, bound before they could even try to escape.

They had been seen on the ridge, watched as they descended, and then had ridden, as if by some fatality, into the ambush prepared by those who waited for them.

CHAPTER III.

YELLOW BEAR HAS THE UPPER HAND.

The scene changes to a camp at a distance of about ten miles from the spot where Young Beaver and his men were entrapped.

It was a camp which had been established by four white men whom the chances of a hunter's life had brought together.

Three of them were our old friends, Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill, and Nick Wharton, the most famous scouts and hunters of the Wild West. The fourth was evidently a young "tenderfoot."

Buffalo Bill had come upon him, a few days before, face to face with a grizzly bear. He had just fired, and missed, and the grizzly was almost upon him. But for a fatal shot from the unerring rifle of the king of the scouts, his earthly career would have ended there and then.

The young man had given his name as Captain Boyd, and said that he had come out from the East to enjoy a taste of wild adventure on the Great Plains.

Buffalo Bill had taken to the young fellow at first sight. He had admired the plucky way he had stood up to the bear and faced what seemed to be certain death.

Therefore he had invited him to join his own party for a time, the invitation being also prompted by the feeling that the young man certainly did not know enough to be trusted to face the perils of the wilderness alone.

Boyd was singularly handsome. His figure was short and slight, but he carried himself gallantly and fearlessly. His features were regular, his hair as dark as Cody's own, and his young, fresh face was innocent of beard or mustache. He did not explain definitely what gave him his title of captain, merely saying vaguely that he belonged to a militia regiment in the East.

The four men were seated round their camp-fire, about noon on the day that the events described in the preceding chapters happened. Buffalo Bill had just cooked some bear steaks, and the men were busy with their meal, eating with the hearty appetite born of a healthy, open-air life.

"If you want excitement, Boyd, you certainly struck the right place to get it," Cody was saying. "I don't see how, knowing so little how to take care of yourself, you managed to get as far as you did. You must have had the blindest of blind luck."

"Yes, I have met with some adventures, but I managed to get through them all right. Is this district so particularly dangerous?"

"Just at present, I should fancy, it is about the most dangerous part of the Great Plains."

"Why?"

"It is on the edge of the Creek country, and the Creeks are restive just now. They are ruled by a very warlike chief, named Yellow Bear, who has not the slightest particle of love for the whites in his ferocious nature. I have met him before, and there are accounts to be settled between us.

"He took prisoner a dear friend of mine named Cecil Dupont, and killed him, after keeping him captive for a

long time in his village. I have sworn to have his life for that."

"How do you expect to achieve your purpose?"

"I don't know," replied the king of the scouts gloomily, "but I hope fortune will favor me. That is why I am so near the Creek country now—for that purpose, and to keep an eye on the Creeks. The military authorities distrust them very much, and General Custer asked me to keep him informed of their movements, if they showed any disposition to be hostile."

"Are the Creeks the only Indians in this part of the country?" asked Boyd.

"No. The lodges of the Sioux are not very far away, and their braves often come over here to hunt. There is bad blood between them and the Creeks, for they both complain that the others trespass on their hunting-grounds. Kicking Horse, the Sioux chief, and Yellow Bear are bitter rivals. I would not give much for the life of either of them if he were to fall into the other's hands."

"I would like to see something of the life in the Indian villages," observed Boyd.

"You had better pray that you won't see it, as I have done, tied to a torture stake," said Wild Bill grimly.

* * * * *

While the scouts were eating the meal, they were unaware that they were being watched.

A single Indian was observing them from the shelter of a thick grove of cottonwood trees, about half-a-mile distant. He was Yellow Bear, who was returning, unsuccessful, from his attempt to steal a wife from the lodges of the Sioux.

The great chief of the Creeks was in a vile humor.

He had dreamed that in the village of Kicking Horse there was a maiden of marvelous beauty, whom the Great Spirit had destined to be his bride. He had grown tired of Wanda, his own queen; and he decided to seek this new wife in the village of his inveterate enemy and rival.

In spite of Wanda's natural protests, he had gone, alone, into the Sioux country, to try to carry out this purpose; but he had met with bad luck.

Not only did he fail to find the girl of his dream, but he was seen by the Sioux, and forced to flee for his life. A bullet broke his left arm at the elbow, and only the speed of his horse saved him when he was pursued by Kicking Horse and several of his braves. He had ridden out of sight, hidden his trail as well as he could, and now he had come, by sheer chance, on the camp of the white men.

He watched them closely for some time, taking care to be himself unseen. Then he went cautiously through the grove, to the place near-by where he had picketed his horse, mounted it, and rode away.

His purpose was to call his warriors to his help, take the scalps of the white men that night, and then try to

have revenge on the Sioux, at whose hands he had fared so badly.

Thus it came about that the smoke signals ascended which brought Wanda and his braves to his assistance.

* * * * *

Buffalo Bill and his companions resolved to stay in their camp until the following day, in order to give their horses a good rest, of which they stood in need.

Toward evening, a small party of mounted Indians came in sight, and rode toward the camp, halting just out of rifle-shot.

The four whites seized their rifles, and stood on guard; but the leader of the Indians held his hands above his head, in token of peace, and then rode slowly forward.

"They are Sioux," said Buffalo Bill. "There is no quarrel between them and the whites just at present. Still, you never can tell. Most Indians are apt to be treacherous. They will lift a paleface scalp when they get the chance, on the quiet, even though the hatchet is buried."

"Ha! This fellow riding forward is Kicking Horse himself. I guess it's all right. He's a man of honor, and I know him. Put down your rifles, but don't put them out of reach."

The king of the scouts made signs to the chief to approach fearlessly, and went forward to meet him.

"How!" exclaimed the Indian, a fine specimen of his race, saluting the scout with his lance. "It is my paleface brother, the great chief, Long Rifle," he added, using the nickname by which Buffalo Bill was known to many Indian tribes, as well as by the more common one of "Long Hair."

"The very same," said the border king. "But what is the chief of the Sioux doing so near the Creek country, with only a handful of his braves?"

"Kicking Horse might ask Long Rifle the same question," retorted the chief, with a grim smile. "Is his scalp so safe if the Creeks catch him?"

"I guess not, but I am here because I've an account to settle with Yellow Bear—and I want to catch him."

"And so does Kicking Horse," said the Sioux, his eyes blazing. "Yellow Bear is a viper. He tried to crawl into the lodges of the Sioux and take away one of their maidens, but my young men caught him, and chased him away. He carried a bullet in him, but he escaped, and we have lost his trail. Have you seen him?"

"No, chief. If I had, I reckon he'd carry another bullet in him."

"Long Rifle shoots far and straight. It is well for Yellow Bear that he did not come in range. But he shall not escape the tomahawk of the Sioux."

"What are you going to do now, chief? You can hardly hope to pick up the trail before dark. You

cannot trail Yellow Bear to-night, and he will be back in his village before morning."

"It is true," said the chief gloomily. "We will camp for the night. In the morning, I will return to my village, gather my braves together, and attack the village of the Creeks."

"I'd like to see the fight, Kicking Horse. Maybe I will. I'd rather shoot Yellow Bear myself, than let you take his scalp."

"Kicking Horse would like to capture him, and tie him to the torture stake."

After uttering this vindictive wish, the chief advanced with Buffalo Bill to his camp, and greeted Wild Bill and Nick Wharton, who had both visited his village on a former occasion, and whom he had known both in peace and war.

He looked with surprise at Boyd's slight figure.

"Wah!" he said, turning to Buffalo Bill. "Why do you bring a weak boy with you? This is no place for him. He should be at home, in the paleface settlements."

"He is not a boy," said Buffalo Bill. "He is a chief among my people—a captain of soldiers. He knows little of the plains, but he is a brave man."

Then he told the Sioux how gallantly Boyd had stood up to the grizzly when he saved his life, after which Kicking Horse looked at the young man with more respect.

He asked Buffalo Bill whether he had any objection to the Sioux camping near him, as the ground was suitable. The scout had none, for he trusted the chief fully. Their mutual hatred of Yellow Bear was in itself a bond between them.

The Sioux went into camp, and the scouts presented them with a liberal supply of meat for their evening meal, for they had been fortunate in their hunting.

Kicking Horse ate supper with the white men, and stayed with them until late, talking over old times when they had met, both as enemies, during the Sioux risings, and as friends, on hunting expeditions. Finally he went back to his own camp, and both parties were soon asleep, save for the sentinels.

The whites kept guard by turns, and Boyd's spell was the last.

This was unfortunate, for he had not learned how to keep a good watch, or the imperative necessity of doing so in such a country.

He saw nothing of the dusky forms that, headed by Yellow Bear, crept from the grove of cottonwoods, where they had left their horses picketed.

Just before dawn, the attack was delivered.

The Sioux camp was first rushed. The sentinel there was on the alert. He fired, and killed one of the Creeks, but next moment the tomahawk of Yellow Bear dashed out his brains.

The rest of the Sioux sprang to their feet almost instantly, and seized their weapons, but, after a few moments' hand-to-hand fighting, they were shot or cut down. Only one of them, Kicking Horse himself, was made a prisoner, being stunned by a blow with the butt of a gun.

The first shot awakened Cody and his two comrades. They seized their rifles, but, as the Creeks came rushing toward them, they saw they were hopelessly outnumbered. There was nothing for it but flight.

After firing once, they raced for their horses, which were close by.

Buffalo Bill had mounted in the saddle, severing the heel-rope with one quick slash of his hunting-knife, and Wild Bill and Nick Wharton had already ridden off, when the border king looked round for Boyd.

The young man had tripped while running, and was struggling in the hands of several Creeks.

Cody was about to go to his rescue, but Boyd shouted: "Save yourself! Then save me!"

Cody instantly saw that this was the best course—indeed, the only course that offered Boyd any hope of life; so, with an encouraging yell, he galloped off after his friends.

Bullet after bullet whistled past him, but he was untouched.

None of the Creeks were mounted, so they could not pursue. They had to get their horses from the cottonwood grove, and, by the time they had done so, the scouts were lost in the darkness, and could not be trailed until morning dawned.

Yellow Bear was enraged at their escape, for he had set his heart on making the famous Long Rifle a prisoner. But he was consoled, in some measure, by the capture of Kicking Horse and by the Sioux scalps his warriors had taken.

On Boyd he looked with contempt at first, until Kicking Horse informed him that the young man was a chief of the paleface soldiers. At dawn, he sent some of his braves off on the trail of the scouts.

In the meantime, the latter had halted, when they had ridden some distance.

"Wild Bill, you ride to Fort Larned, and bring troopers to punish the Creeks. Nick, you go to Fort Hazen," said Cody.

"And you?"

"I will go back and watch the Creeks. They will not harm young Boyd to-night. They will keep him for the torture stake when they return to their village. I will hang round the camp they establish all day. I can snatch some sleep early in the night, and then see what I can manage to do just before dawn—the time their sentinels will not be so much on the alert."

After some discussion, all the scouts agreed to this plan.

They were resolved that they would not leave Boyd to his fate, under any circumstances, for they had a great liking for the gallant young man, and, in any case, they would never have deserted a comrade.

Wharton and Hickok rode off in the direction of the respective forts, at which they could find a force of troopers ever ready to take to the saddle. They realized that it was not only necessary to rescue Boyd, but also to teach the Creeks a lesson that would prevent them from interfering with white people in the future.

Cody rode back by a circuitous route, and, in the course of the following day, came in sight of the camp of Yellow Bear's warriors. He watched it, himself unseen, and at night took up a position higher up the river near which it was pitched.

While scouting during the day, he discovered, through his field-glasses, that Kicking Horse was also a captive, and determined to do his best to save him.

After darkness fell, he lay down to sleep for awhile, with his horse for a pillow. He knew that it would be of no use to attempt a rescue until late at night or early in the morning, when the camp would be still, save for the few sentinels.

As he possessed the rare faculty of being able always to awake at the exact hour he determined before lying down, he did not fear to sleep. He knew that he would be ready for action the moment that action promised a chance of success.

Meanwhile, we must return to Dreaming Flower, and see what is happening to her.

CHAPTER IV.

DREAMING FLOWER'S MYSTERIOUS LETTER.

It was not until her late captors were defeated, and most of them stricken down, that Dreaming Flower knew who it was that had ambuscaded and attacked them, or realized whether she was only changing from one captor to another, or was once more free.

For it was twilight, and one Indian yells so like another that she could not tell what tribe had made the sudden and unexpected attack.

But now she found that it was Wanda herself who headed this party, and who had remained there to rest, while only her best-mounted warriors had gone on with Yellow Bear, who had met her in this valley, to attack the whites.

Wanda, when fires were lighted, looked angrily at Dreaming Flower, and asked how it was that she had been captured with only Red Plume in her company.

Dreaming Flower, ever fearful of the wrath of this fierce woman, for more than once had she beaten her cruelly, answered that she had ridden a little way from the village, and was in sight of it, when these Sioux

rode suddenly up, and surrounded her. Red Plume had made a brave resistance, she added, but was overpowered.

"Where was Evil Eye?" asked Wanda. "I bade her on no account to lose sight of you."

"She rode with us, but she would have a high-spirited horse, and it ran away with her," said Dreaming Flower, who could hardly restrain her mirth as she remembered the way the old hag went flying out of sight, with the red robe streaming behind her.

"She was a fool! If her neck is broken, it will be small loss!" said Wanda angrily. "Who are these?" she added, as she looked at the prisoners.

"Sioux, belonging to the tribe of Kicking Horse," was the answer.

"Good. Yellow Bear will know what to do with them when he returns. He came to me empty-handed, as I said he would, and with an arm broken. He now seeks revenge on some whites, whose camp he saw. But he will have no success. I frowned when he went. He will come back again empty-handed, but I will give him these prisoners for the torture stake."

Wanda now ordered all the camp-fires lighted, and, while her warriors cooked and ate their meat, her supper was served.

Then, with a huge tree at her back, she sat and gazed into the fire, while, near her, Dreaming Flower reclined on the soft grass, thinking of the mysterious stranger who had written to her four times, asking herself if he would indeed be near her, as he had said he would in his letters, when she was in trouble.

Red Plume stood with his eyes apparently fixed upon the moon, now up in the clear sky, though at times he dropped a furtive glance upon the lovely face and form of Dreaming Flower, as the firelight fell in soft splendor upon it.

At last, Wanda closed her eyes, and her heavy breathing told that she slept.

Now Dreaming Flower took from her bosom the roll of bark which she had taken from the hollow tree, and, with a pleased look, she read it over and over.

Suddenly she started, and a cry nearly broke from her lips, for another roll, almost like the first, dropped directly in her lap.

Dreaming Flower looked eagerly all around her, up into the trees, and in every direction, but she could see no stranger.

She unrolled the bark, and in the same characters, but evidently written in haste, and apparently with a piece of charcoal, were these words:

"He who loves Dreaming Flower is near her now. She may sleep in peace, for he will watch over her safety. The winged angel of dreams will hover about her, and give her bright visions."

"Near me now," she murmured. "Where can he be? And who? In what shape can I see him? Oh, how

strange this mystery! A spirit cannot write and leave these tangible signs of presence. Oh, that I might see him!"

A sigh, full and tremulous, reached her ears. From where, she knew not. But she knew she heard it.

She looked up into the shadowy trees, she looked on the sleeping forms about her, at Red Plume, standing in the distance, silent and immovable as a statue. It could not be he. He could not write, or use the beautiful language found in her letters.

Who could it be? Where was he now? Why could she not, even for an instant, look upon him?

All these questions rose in her mind, but no answer came.

"I will try to sleep. Maybe the blessed Angel of Dreams will help me," she murmured; "and I will ask the Spirit to show him to me, so that I may remember him if he comes before my waking eyes."

The lovely girl pressed the missive last received to her red, pouting lips, and then placed it with the other in her bosom.

Then she lay down on a blanket which Red Plume had spread for her after the camp-fires were lighted, and soon she slept.

Before day dawned, Wanda, the Creek queen, had her warriors astir, for the distant sound of guns had reached her ears, and she knew that Yellow Bear had met enemies, for the firing had been sharp and continuous.

At the first gleam of light sufficient to show a trail, she moved on at the head of her band, bidding Red Plume attend Dreaming Flower, who rode farther back in the line.

A special guard was placed over the Sioux prisoners, whom Wanda designed as a pleasant surprise for Yellow Bear.

"Did Dreaming Flower see the blessed Spirit of Dreams last night?" asked Red Plume, in a low tone, as they rode along.

"Yes!" said the lovely girl.

"It is right that Red Plume should hear what the Dream Spirit told her?"

"The Dream Spirit came to me in a new shape. He was a young paleface, with dark eyes and long, flowing hair, as black as night itself. He held a roll of white bark in his hand, and on it was written: 'I love Dreaming Flower, the white rose of the prairie!'"

"A paleface? Is Dreaming Flower sure that his face was white?" asked Red Plume, with a sad, disappointed look.

"Yes. He was young and beautiful to look upon, and his voice was low and sweet, like that of the ring-dove."

"The Dream Spirit is a liar," murmured the young brave, in a tone too low for her to understand what he said.

But she saw that his face looked dark and troubled, and she said:

"Is not Red Plume, the good friend of Dreaming Flower, well?"

"Yes. But a cloud is on his spirit. He, too, has had a dream."

"Will not Red Plume tell his dream to Dreaming Flower?"

The young warrior was about to reply, when there was a sudden commotion in the line, and Wanda put the whole column forward at its greatest speed.

The other band, under Yellow Bear, was seen scattered over the plains, as if in flight, and the daring queen, thinking that the chief had been attacked by superior numbers, and perhaps defeated, hurried on to his assistance.

Amid all this excitement, Red Plume and Dreaming Flower had no further chance to speak, and for miles they sped on in the swift column without exchanging a word or look.

Then Wanda met Yellow Bear, who had remained with a chosen band of warriors while the rest of his braves had dashed away in pursuit of the scouts.

Yellow Bear had his two prisoners with him.

When Wanda rode up and met her chief, she looked with some contempt at Kicking Horse and Captain Boyd, and asked:

"Are these all the prisoners you took?"

"All," admitted the chief. "There was a fight, and my braves have some scalps in their belts. Yellow Bear hopes that three more prisoners—palefaces—will be taken. His braves are now chasing them. But these two are well worth taking. This is Kicking Horse, the great chief of the Sioux; the other is a chief among the palefaces."

Suddenly a cry burst from the lips of Dreaming Flower, who rode up at this moment.

"Who is this?" she gasped, pointing to Captain Boyd.

"A paleface doomed to the torture stake," replied Yellow Bear sternly.

"No, no! He must not die! He is the Dream Angel whom I saw last night," she cried.

Had she seen the black, bitter look of hatred which Red Plume cast upon Boyd when she said this, the girl would have trembled.

"Dreaming Flower is a child. She dreams too much. Why is she not at home, in the lodge of Yellow Bear?" demanded the Creek chief.

"She and Red Plume were captured in sight of your lodge by the Sioux. Wanda rescued them, and she holds six Sioux captives as a present for her chief," said the Amazonian chieftainess.

At a signal from her, the prisoners were brought before Yellow Bear.

Kicking Horse recognized Young Beaver, and asked him why he had allowed a woman to become his captor.

"Because Young Beaver was blind, and fell into a trap," said the young chief bitterly. "The Great Spirit has willed that he should die with his chief."

"The will of the Great Spirit shall be done, and it is not for us to weep over it," said Kicking Horse calmly. "We can teach the Creeks how Sioux warriors can die."

Yellow Bear now ordered the column to move west, to a camping-ground in sight, where he would wait for his warriors who were out in pursuit of the fugitives to come in.

Seeing that Dreaming Flower looked with strange longing on the face of the young captain, whom she persisted in calling the Dream Angel, he bade Wanda keep her close under her own eye and apart from all but the young brave who had long been set apart to wait upon and serve her—Red Plume.

At noon, the entire party was encamped on the banks of the river, and Yellow Bear waited for his scattered warriors to rally, sending up smoke after smoke, to show where he was, and to hurry their movements.

Kicking Horse looked grimly on as these smoke columns ascended, for he knew that they would act as signals to rally his warriors to his help also.

CHAPTER V.

AN ESCAPE FROM THE CREEKS.

Buffalo Bill did not find it as easy to go to sleep that night as he had confidently told Nick Wharton and Wild Bill he would. Tired as he was, he lay for a long time, with his head resting upon his horse, wondering whether his two friends would succeed in reaching the forts for which they set out.

He knew how necessary it was to punish the Creeks as quickly as possible for their attack. Otherwise, a serious Indian war might break out.

At last he fell asleep. He was awakened—he could not tell at what hour, for the face of the moon was obscured by clouds—by the uneasy motions of his horse.

The animal, as its master partially raised up, showed by twitching its ears that it heard suspicious sounds. Buffalo Bill felt confident that the danger, whatever it might be, was very near; for soon the animal did not make the slightest motion, but lay still, with its ears pointed forward.

The king of the scouts reached carefully for his repeating rifle, and felt for his belt, to be sure that his knife and revolvers were in their place.

For a few moments, all was as still as if no living thing was near.

Then Buffalo Bill heard sounds—very light, but plain and distinct to his acute ears.

It was the tread of human beings—the sounds of one

or more persons coming up to him in the grass and among the tangled patches of sage-brush.

Neither horse nor man moved, for Buffalo Bill thought that the Indians were thus scouting the hills on foot to find him and his two comrades. If they heard no sound, lying so low as he did, they might possibly pass him and his horse unnoticed.

Nearer and nearer, walking with excessive caution, the scout heard them come. And it seemed as if they could scent him, for they were coming directly upon him.

He cocked his rifle, for he believed he would have to use it.

"Hark!" said some one in good English. "That was a strange noise."

"A stick broke," said another voice, low and soft—plainly the voice of a woman.

Whoever it was, they remained silent, evidently listening for a minute or more. It seemed a long time to Buffalo Bill, for his nerves were all in tension now.

Then they moved on, and in another moment would have been fairly upon him, when the scout, in a low, stern voice, asked:

"Who comes there?"

There was a second of silence, and then, in a voice which Buffalo Bill recognized as that of Captain Boyd, came the answer:

"A friend to any one not leagued with these cursed savages."

"Ah, it is you, Captain Boyd?" said Buffalo Bill, in his natural voice. "I am more pleased than I can say to see that you have got away from the redskins. Who is with you?"

"An angel, I believe. Anyway, she has been a saving angel to me. She cut the thongs that bound me, about two hours ago, and led me out from the Creek camp, where they meant to roast me alive. She is white and beautiful, though Yellow Bear claims her as his daughter."

"I have heard of a beautiful white girl among the Creeks, known as Dreaming Flower," said Buffalo Bill. "She is supposed to have been stolen from one of the settlements when she was young, and raised by them."

"I am Dreaming Flower," said the soft voice of the young girl, who now approached the spot where Buffalo Bill stood, he and his horse having both risen.

"Well, I am delighted you are out of bad hands and in such good company, Captain Boyd," said the king of the scouts. "But there'll be a fuss down there when they know you have got away."

Buffalo Bill pointed toward the fires in the Creek camp, which were in plain view when he spoke.

"Hark! They know it now," said the girl anxiously. "We must not stop. Yellow Bear will hunt us, as the gray wolf hunts the wounded bear."

Fierce yells could be heard far down the valley.

"What pains have you taken to conceal your trail?" asked Buffalo Bill earnestly.

"None. We came right along, as quietly and as quickly as we could," said Boyd.

"Then, when daylight comes, they will follow you easily. We have a few hours to get a start in, and we must play cunning. Both of you walk up that brook three or four hundred yards. Then enter the stream, and come down a little way in the water; then get out on the other side, and walk down to where I am."

Captain Boyd and Dreaming Flower obeyed without hesitation, and, when they were once more by the side of Buffalo Bill, they had traversed nearly a quarter of a mile in distance.

"Now follow me, exactly in line, one behind the other, and be careful not to touch a thing on the shore, or to let a step be made out of the water after you enter it," said the scout.

Leading his horse, they started toward the plains, entering the water, with the head of the animal looking down-stream to where the brook widened on a rocky shelf, and then turned up the stream. Now, himself going ahead of the horse, and followed by Boyd and Dreaming Flower, the crafty scout went directly up the brook in the swift current, which would wash out every track as fast as it was made.

Meantime, whenever they paused, they could hear the noise made by the excited Creeks who were searching far below. Therefore their halts were few and of brief duration.

As they ascended the stream, the gorge through which it came narrowed down, and the banks rose high and dark on either side, so that it became very difficult to proceed.

At last, just as the glimmer of the coming day began to show in the sky, they were stopped entirely. A waterfall which the horse could not pass tumbled down from a lofty ledge. The banks on either hand were also precipitous.

"It seems to me as if we are in a trap," said Captain Boyd.

"We are, if our trail is discovered," agreed Buffalo Bill. "But we are in a splendid place for defense. We must wait a little in patience now, and see how things look by daylight."

"We shall not have to wait long," said Boyd.

In a short time, there was sufficient light for the scout to see, on his right, a great chasm in the cliff. The water of some high flood had swept out huge portions of rock and dirt, leaving room enough for fifty or sixty men to sit at ease on a dry, rocky floor.

"We have a good resting-place in there," said Buffalo Bill. "There is plenty of room for all of us, and we shall be out of sight from the banks above. A better hiding-place could not be wished for."

He at once led his horse into this great hall, and, tearing some grass by the roots from the water's edge, he threw it down for the animal to eat.

He now had time to take his first good look at Dreaming Flower.

"Well, by thunder, you are beautiful!" he exclaimed, the frank compliment being literally wrung from him by her lovely face and figure.

The girl was not at all abashed by his words, owing to her Indian training.

"Ah, if the Dream Spirit will but think so!" she murmured, looking at Captain Boyd.

"What does she mean by the Dream Spirit?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"That appears to be the name she has given me," said Captain Boyd, and he blushed more deeply than Dreaming Flower herself would ever have dreamed of doing.

"You are he who came to me in my dreams—he who whispered the sweet words 'I love you' in my ear—he to whom I have given all my heart and soul!" cried the girl passionately. "You are he whom I have led away from death, that you may be mine forever!"

And the lovely creature threw her round, white arms around the captain's neck.

He seemed as much embarrassed as a schoolboy getting hugged before all the school, but Dreaming Flower did not notice it, or, if she did, she did not mind. Her head was bowed upon his breast.

"A clear case of love at first sight," murmured Buffalo Bill. "It was useful for Boyd, for it got him out of a pretty tight place."

"If you and Dreaming Flower will remain here quietly, and look out for the horse," he added to Captain Boyd, "I will go up above, and reconnoiter. I see a place where I can climb the cliff, and then I will take to a tree, and try to find out whether we are followed."

"All right—we will wait and watch," said the young captain.

"I will leave you my rifle. It would only be in my way in climbing. I'll keep my knife and pistols."

"I'll take care of the gun, and use it, if necessary," said Boyd. "But don't expose yourself unnecessarily, Cody."

"I'm not in the habit of doing that," replied the scout. He patted his horse on the neck, and said:

"Stay here, old boy, and feed till I come back."

The intelligent animal, thoroughly trained by his master, looked up, as if it understood him, and went on feeding when he turned away.

CHAPTER VI.

BUFFALO BILL'S LOOKOUT.

Having left a good supply of grass for his horse, Buffalo Bill again cautioned Boyd to remain quiet in his hiding-place. There was no need to warn poor Dream-

ing Flower, for she was bound, in her infatuation, to remain where her Dream Spirit was. She would have had to be torn away from him by force.

The scout went into and down the stream for a short distance, until he reached a place where, aided by out-bent trees and shrubs, he could clamber to the top of the cliff.

Once there, he hurried forward to a point from which he could look down on the plains and into the valley.

He saw, as far as his eye could reach, scattered parties of Indians, apparently in search of the fugitives. Some of these were well up toward the hills, but they had not reached the right trail—that much was evident.

What seemed singular to him was that there seemed to be a great accession in the number of the redskins, as if all the Creeks in the whole nation were coming to answer the signals of Yellow Bear.

But suddenly he saw how this was to be accounted for. He saw that the scattered parties in the east were riding westward with great rapidity; he saw, by wreaths of smoke here and there in the distance, that the Sioux also were gathering to attack the Creeks, and try to rescue their chief.

All the Indians in sight were not Creeks. Yellow Bear's smoke signals had done a double work.

For a moment, he wished that he could be down where he could see, and perhaps join in, the approaching fight; but, on second thoughts, he muttered:

"It is only dog eat dog. Let them fight it out."

With his glass, he swept the eastern horizon, hoping to see some sign of the troops which Nick Wharton or Wild Bill might have succeeded in bringing up, though he knew in his heart that it was too soon to expect them.

He kept at his post for some time, and then, feeling as if he could relish a square meal, he made up his mind to have it.

Game was in sight at a dozen points in the vicinity, and he did not think any Indians were near enough to hear a revolver-shot, especially as war parties of Creeks and Sioux already seemed to be fighting in squads below.

So he descended from a peak of rocks which he had used as a lookout, and crept down, against the wind, into a ravine where he had seen a herd of elk feeding.

The animals were still there, and, with such skill as only the practised hunter possesses, Buffalo Bill crept from rock to rock, until he was within short pistol-shot of the nearest—a fine, fat yearling.

To raise his revolver, fire, and send a death-shot through the heart of the animal was the work of a moment only.

The revolver made but little noise, and the herd hardly noticed the fall of the animal, until the hunter approached to secure the meat. Then they trotted off at an easy gait, which showed that they had not been much troubled by hunters.

Buffalo Bill, having cut off from the choicest parts of the animal as much meat as he could easily carry, returned toward the hiding-place where his horse and Boyd kept company with Dreaming Flower.

Near the edge of the cliff, Buffalo Bill gathered a bundle of dry sticks, with which to make a fire, and then he descended to the cave.

He found Boyd and Dreaming Flower seated in earnest conversation, for Boyd was trying to interest the girl by describing to her the ways and customs of civilized people in the great world of which she knew nothing; the ways of people of her own color, of which she had only heard through the captive whom Yellow Bear had slain.

Dreaming Flower was not speaking, but, with her great, earnest eyes gazing into the face of the young captain, she was listening to his voice, as if it were music to her soul.

"All comfortable here?" asked the scout, as he entered the cave, and threw down the bundle of wood. Then he unfastened the meat from a rawhide thong which held it behind his back.

"Yes, thank you. Have you any news from our anxious friends in the valley?" replied Boyd.

"Nothing that can serve us just now. They seem pretty busy. I'll take another look at them by and by. At present, if your appetites equal mine, I have something better to do. I propose to have some breakfast."

The border king commenced his preparations by kindling a fire on the rock floor of their temporary dwelling in a corner, out of the way, where there was also a draft for the little smoke he made.

"Dreaming Flower knows how to cook. She will prepare the meal," said the girl, as Buffalo Bill started the fuel into a blaze.

"Thank you, my good girl," said the scout kindly. "If you had rather do it than not, you may; though I am rather handy about the fire myself."

Dreaming Flower took the forked sticks which the hunter had thoughtfully provided, and soon had the meat in position. Then, while Buffalo Bill was relating to Captain Boyd his belief that the Sioux had come into contact with the Creeks below, she stood and listened.

Reared from her infancy in the lodge of a great war-chief, used to hearing stories of battles, she felt a far greater interest in the story that there was a battle going on in the valley than would one of her race, raised as they usually are.

Thus she stood listening, when the sound of a stone dropping from the ledge at the mouth of the cave drew her quick eye in that direction.

At the same instant, hearing the same sound, Buffalo Bill looked in the same direction.

His hand flew to his pistol-belt, for there stood an armed Indian warrior, almost within a spear's length.

CHAPTER VII.

YELLOW BEAR'S RAGE.

When it was discovered by the Creeks that the young paleface prisoner had escaped, though he had lain, bound hand and foot, close to the shelter of branches made for Yellow Bear and his family, there was tremendous excitement throughout the camp.

The alarm was given loudly, and parties of braves were sent in every direction.

The discovery was made by the sentinel who had been directed to patrol the camp, which was also guarded by mounted braves who, acting as videttes, rode in a large circle, outside the grazing ground of the stock.

He had seen the two chief prisoners, Kicking Horse and the young paleface, lying side by side, asleep, and he had gone down to the river to get a drink.

He returned. The paleface still lay there, as he thought, but he had drawn his blanket over his head—perhaps to shield it from the mosquitoes.

He passed on from point to point in his beat, and re-passed the place where the prisoners lay several times. The eyes of Kicking Horse were wide open, but he said nothing, and the sentinel had no idea that the paleface was gone.

When he again came back, Kicking Horse had rolled over on his face, and he now lay very close to the other.

Thinking there might be some collusion between the two, the sentinel lifted the blanket which he supposed covered the body of the paleface prisoner.

That body was gone.

The yell of surprise that broke from the sentinel's lips was the first note of alarm. Soon that alarm spread on every hand.

Yellow Bear, excited to frenzy by the escape of one whom he had intended to torture, drove his hatchet into the brain of the luckless sentinel, without waiting to ask how the escape occurred.

A moment later, the voice of a young brave was heard shouting:

"Dreaming Flower slept near Wanda, the queen. She is not there now. Where has she gone?"

It was Red Plume who spoke. Then he remembered that the fair girl had said that the paleface should not die—that he was the bright spirit of her dreams; and, in an instant, he comprehended how the bonds of the paleface had been severed, how he had been so cunningly taken out under the eye of the sentinel.

"Dreaming Flower? Cannot she be found?" shouted Yellow Bear.

Warriors called her name on every side, but there was no answer.

"She has gone with the paleface," said Wanda bitterly. "She has turned on the hand that fed her. Like all of her bad blood, she has been a she-wolf, to steal away

from those who raised her. When they are taken, let her burn by his side!"

Yellow Bear did not speak. He bowed his head in grief. He had loved the girl as if she were his own child. He had ever called her so.

"Let not a brave rest till she is found," he said; "but let not a hair of her head be harmed. Yellow Bear has spoken."

"Yellow Bear is growing old," said Wanda bitterly. "Old and foolish! He lets his heart speak before his head takes thought. He is a child."

The chief did not speak, but he stood and gazed at Kicking Horse, who sat upon the ground, and looked at him.

"The Sioux saw the young paleface go off?" said Yellow Bear.

Kicking Horse nodded assent.

"Did he go alone?" asked Yellow Bear.

Kicking Horse made no answer.

The Creek chief again asked the question.

"How or when he went is his business," said Kicking Horse firmly. "I have no tales to tell. Yellow Bear must look to his guards, and not to Kicking Horse, for the story."

Yellow Bear, for an instant, placed his hand on his hatchet, and he felt like ending the days of the chief then and there. Had he done so, he would not have had the joy of seeing him tortured, so he turned away, and asked for Red Plume.

No one could tell where he was now. He had gone with the rest, to look for Dreaming Flower and the fugitive paleface.

Wanda, in her bitterness, said:

"All this has come because Yellow Bear was not content with his own squaw, but must listen to dreams, like a fool. It has all come through his going abroad to seek for another wife."

"Woman! Yellow Bear will not let even you call him a fool," said the chief angrily. "You will eat your words, or lose your tongue."

"May not a woman speak the truth?" asked the haughty squaw.

"Wanda has spoken a lie. The Great Spirit comes and whispers in dreams, and he is not a fool who opens his ear to them. That was what I did when I went abroad to seek for a wife among the Sioux. Lie down, and be still. Yellow Bear does not want to quarrel with Wanda. He does not want to forget that she is his wife."

"He did—or he would not be here," said Wanda, who was bound, womanlike, to have the last word.

Yellow Bear made no reply, but turned away, to see in person to the security of Young Beaver and the other captives. Having found them safe, he came back to his own camp-fire, folded his blanket around him, and sat down.

Thus he remained until day dawned, when he sent all his braves, except a guard of a score or less, to seek far and near for the fugitives.

If the trail was found, it was to be followed until they were captured, but especial care was to be taken to secure and bring them both back uninjured.

The chief loved Dreaming Flower with an affection rare in an Indian, even for his own flesh and blood. If she was found, he could not be persuaded to injure her. But woe betide the paleface!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEATH OF YELLOW BEAR.

When Buffalo Bill saw the dark face of that red warrior in the mouth of the cave, he believed him to be only the leader of a band, for he had no thought one would dare to face two armed men, and he raised his pistol, to end his career.

But, with the speed of thought, Dreaming Flower caught his arm.

"Do not fire!" she cried. "It is Red Plume, my friend and brother!"

"Let him shoot! Red Plume does not want to live any longer," said the young Indian, coming forward and throwing bow and spear on the ground. "He has followed Dreaming Flower, to see her with the people she has chosen as her friends—the people of her own color—and to ask if she is here of her own free choice."

"Dreaming Flower is here because she wanted to come. She could not see the paleface brave, the beautiful Dream Spirit, die at the torture post to which Yellow Bear had sworn to bind him."

Dreaming Flower pointed to Captain Boyd as she spoke.

Red Plume looked also at the young paleface, and then, turning to Dreaming Flower, asked in a low, earnest tone:

"Has Dreaming Flower given her heart to this paleface, whom she calls the Dream Spirit?"

"Yes—I love him! He is my life!" she said passionately.

"Then it is time for Red Plume to die!" said the young warrior, and he drew his knife from its scabbard, and raised it, with the evident intention of plunging it into his breast.

Captain Boyd caught his arm, and snatched away the weapon.

"Red Plume," said he, "you love Dreaming Flower. I will not—I cannot—stand in your way. Come and listen to a word from me that may make your mind easy."

"The mind of Red Plume will be easy when he sleeps his last sleep," said the Indian sullenly.

But Captain Boyd drew him aside, and whispered

some words in the ear of the Indian, which seemed to have a strange effect upon him.

He drew back, looked earnestly in the face of the young captain, and then, actually laughing—a strange thing for an Indian to do—he took both of the captain's hands in his, and said:

"Paleface brother, we will be good friends. Red Plume will no longer grieve because Dreaming Flower loves you."

Buffalo Bill and Dreaming Flower were astonished at this sudden change, and the scout rather doubted its honesty; but it was better than he expected.

"Will Red Plume now say if he came alone, or are there others of his tribe on our trail?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Red Plume came alone. No eye but his found the trail of Dreaming Flower and the palefaces. He would let no one see where he went when he found it, for he lay down, and crawled like a snake. Now Red Plume will stay with Dreaming Flower and her friends, and help them. He does not want to go back to Yellow Bear. The great chief is mad, and he will kill Red Plume if he sees him."

"Is Kicking Horse yet safe?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"He is bound with many thongs. He will be watched till the death song is sung."

"It must not be sung for him," said the scout. "I have promised myself that I will save him, and I must. The word of Long Rifle has never been broken to white man or red, or even to himself."

"What is the Indian's life to you?" asked Captain Boyd impatiently.

"As a mere life—nothing; but as a pledged safeguard of my word—everything."

"How can we get away, let alone helping him?" asked Boyd.

"I don't know yet, but I guess all will come right. I've been in some bad scrapes before, but I got through all safe in the end," said Buffalo Bill quietly. "When night comes, I will scout down toward the camp. I may see some way to get the old chief out of the clutches of his enemies."

"Red Plume will go and help you," said the Indian.

"What! And leave the Dreaming Flower here with the handsome paleface?" asked Buffalo Bill, much surprised at this offer of service.

"Yes. Red Plume knows that Dreaming Flower is safe. He is no longer a fool. He will not be afraid of the Dream Spirit."

Dreaming Flower smiled with pleasure, and said:

"Now Red Plume is wise. He shall be my brother, as he has always been; and the beautiful Dream Spirit shall be my husband."

Again Red Plume laughed. And this time Captain Boyd laughed also. Buffalo Bill did the same, for he

began to guess the truth. As for Dreaming Flower, she looked at them in amazement, wondering what they all found to laugh at.

"We will go out of the wilderness," she went on, "into the great world that he has told me of, where there are wigwams as high as mountains, and villages in which one will tire out with walking, and yet never leave their bounds. We will see all that is beautiful, and, if that world is better than this, we will stay there. If not, we will come back, and live here until the Great Master of Life calls us."

"What a lovely dreamer she is!" said Boyd, in a low tone.

"We may as well think of something more substantial than dreams," chimed in Buffalo Bill. "The elk steaks are rather overdone now, and I am hungry."

This remark was appreciated by all the party, and they at once fell to, and ate heartily.

As soon as Buffalo Bill's hunger was satisfied, he rose to his feet, for he wanted to see what was going on in the camp of the Creeks. So, telling Red Plume to remain with Dreaming Flower and Boyd while he went out to scout, he left the cave, and again clambered up the precipice, and went to his lookout.

He had brought his rifle this time, for he intended, if it could be done with any degree of safety, to get near enough to see where Kicking Horse was kept, and, if possible, take the range so as to attempt his release in the night.

When he got to his lookout, the scout adjusted his field-glasses, and commenced his observations.

"The Sioux certainly are on the war-path!" was his first exclamation. "But they are fighting the Creeks in squads. It does not seem to be a general battle. Yellow Bear can have precious few men left in his camp. Likely enough, a Sioux party will find it, and settle his hash for him, and release his prisoners.

"Ah! One of the Creeks is leaving in a hurry. A courier to rally the rest of the tribe, I reckon. I'll spoil his game if he comes inside of a half-mile range."

This last remark was made when Buffalo Bill saw a single Indian, mounted on a powerful horse, dash away from the camp, and ride off to the northwest on a course which would bring him almost within rifle-shot of the scout.

The latter at once left his position, and, taking the back of a ravine for cover in his route, ran with hot haste to reach a point which might possibly bring him within rifle-shot.

He did not get another sight of the brave until he had reached an abrupt point of rocks where a gorge through the mountain left a path easy to travel.

Most men would have thought that he was well out of range, but Buffalo Bill had an exceptionally good and

long rifle, and he depended upon it now for one of the longest shots he had ever made in his life.

He drew back behind a stunted cedar-tree, and, for once in his life, took a rest for his rifle. He generally scorned to do this, always firing offhand, as quick as thought, whether he raised rifle or pistol. But this was a terribly long shot, and he doubted whether he could make it.

After he had fired, he was almost sure that he had missed, for the Indian never stirred from his seat, and the horse bounded steadily forward.

Buffalo Bill took another sight of his rifle, and fired again.

Just as his finger touched the trigger, the horse leaped over a fallen tree, and the bullet pierced its head, instead of the breast of the Indian.

The horse fell, and the Indian went with him.

Seeing that the latter did not rise, the king of the scouts, with his weapon cocked, hastened to the spot as fast as he could.

To his surprise, he found that the first ball had done its work. It had pierced the breast of the redskin. But what astonished Buffalo Bill most was that the Indian was none other than Yellow Bear. He was dying.

The chief recognized him, and gasped his name:

"Long Rifle!"

"Yes, it is I," said the scout. "Yellow Bear, you have about done your journey. You will soon be in the happy hunting-ground. I did not know it was you when I fired, but now I see I have fulfilled my oath. I swore I would kill you, and I have done so."

The chief look at him questioningly. Feeble with the approach of death, he asked Buffalo Bill why he had wished to kill him more than any other of his people—more than any other red man.

"Because you killed one of my dear friends—the paleface you held captive so long, and slew at last in a fit of passion. I heard of it through some friendly Pawnees who visited your lodges. The man was my friend, Cecil Dupont."

Yellow Bear looked amazed, even in his agony.

"Ha! The paleface who taught Dreaming Flower to read the speaking papers, and then fell in love with her. Where is Dreaming Flower now? Does Long Hair know?"

"Yes. She is safe. She is where your braves will not find her. I will try to see that she is restored to her own people, if any of her family are still living."

"It is well—now that I am dying," admitted the chief, thanking Buffalo Bill with a look of gratitude. Even in the agony of death, his fatherly love for the beautiful white girl was still his ruling passion.

"Why did you leave your camp so hurriedly?" Buffalo Bill asked curiously; and he was not surprised at the answer given him.

"The Sioux attacked it. I had only a few braves left with me. They were cut down. Wanda, my queen, rode away. I alone of the men escaped. I would have died with my braves, but I wanted to find Dreaming Flower."

The dying chief, with a spasmodic effort, tugged at a thong around his neck until he pulled a buckskin bag from beneath his hunting-shirt.

"Take and keep it," he whispered. "It is for Dreaming Flower. When she goes to the happy hunting-ground, she will know her father and mother, if she keeps this."

The old chief raised the bag in his hand, looked fixedly at the sky, and then his head fell back. He was dead.

Buffalo Bill looked at him for an instant, almost with pity, and then he opened the bag which had been passed to him in the moment of death. He found inside it two morocco leather cases.

On opening one, he saw two beautifully painted miniatures, done on ivory, facing each other in the case. One was the portrait of a woman, with golden-colored hair, blue eyes, and beautiful features. The other was that of a man, young and handsome, but with a darker face and dark hair.

Under the picture of the woman, written on the ivory, was the name, "Adele Benoist." Under the picture of the man was written, "Edward Benoist."

The astonished border king gazed for a moment on these pictures, and then opened the other case. It contained the picture of an infant—a perfect little cherub of beauty, with a wealth of golden curls framing the loveliest face of a child that Buffalo Bill had ever seen. Under this picture was written, "Cecile Benoist."

Then a thought struck him:

"It is Dreaming Flower herself, when she was a child; and these are the pictures of her parents. I will take them to her. They may lead to her happy restoration yet in the civilized world."

The scout replaced the portraits in the bag, and placed it in his hunting-pouch. Then he turned back over his trail.

Once or twice he paused to look down on the plains, and now he saw that the Indians appeared to be concentrating, and that the fighting had ceased.

"I reckon that the Sioux have come out ahead," he muttered, as he passed on.

CHAPTER IX.

BELLE BOYD'S STRANGE STORY.

As usual, Nick Wharton and Wild Bill had not let the grass grow under the feet of their horses. They had ridden at a terrific speed toward the two forts where they could round up a force of soldiers to attack the Creeks.

Both of them had perilous journeys, but, by great scouting skill, allied to good luck, both got through.

Wild Bill reached Fort Larned, and found the famous General Custer there. With his usual promptitude, Custer got a body of troopers under arms at once, and took the trail. On the way, he effected a juncture with another force, which Nick Wharton had brought, hot-foot, from Fort Hazen.

But when they arrived on the scene of action, Custer and his men found nothing to do. They were too late. There were no Creeks left to fight. The Sioux had seen to that very effectually.

They had rescued their chief, Kicking Horse, besides Young Beaver and the other prisoners. All of the Creeks who had not been scalped had fled in every direction.

There was no quarrel at that time between the whites and the Sioux. Kicking Horse established a camp on the plain, and Custer bivouacked his men about half-a-mile away. He intended to use the opportunity to have a friendly palaver with Kicking Horse, and improve the good relations with his tribe.

The soldiers had not been encamped long, when Nick Wharton, who, as usual, was keeping his eyes about him in all directions, gave a shout of joy. He pointed to a little party approaching, in which he had recognized his friend and leader, Buffalo Bill.

The king of the scouts was leading his horse, on which rode a white girl in the picturesque dress of an Indian maiden. She was so strangely, wildly beautiful that, as she came near, General Custer and his officers expressed their wonder aloud.

On the other side of the horse was a Creek, without war-paint—Red Plume—and the white man, Captain Boyd.

General Custer greeted the king of the scouts, who was a great friend of his, very warmly.

"And now," he said, bowing low, "will you be so kind as to tell us who this beautiful white lady in Indian costume is?"

"I am afraid she cannot tell herself, general; and I am sure I cannot. She has been reared from infancy by Yellow Bear, the Creek chief. He called her his daughter, but, when he was dying—I shot him awhile ago—he gave me a bag with the miniatures of a baby, a man, and a woman. From what he said, I am sure they are the pictures of the girl, as an infant, and of her father and mother. She has them, and must show them to you."

The girl handed the bag to the general, who took out the pictures, and read the names aloud.

"Benoist? There are Benoists in Arizona," said Wild Bill. "I knew a man of that name, and he wasn't a slouch, either. I saw him shoot two greasers and two Apaches, all in one morning."

The general turned to Dreaming Flower, and said:

"You shall have a tent for your own occupation until we can reach a place where inquiries may be made that may restore you to your relatives, if they are living."

"I will not stay anywhere, unless the Dream Spirit is with me," said Dreaming Flower, in a determined tone, and she pointed to Captain Boyd.

"Who is this gentleman?" asked the general, as he now took notice of the young captain for the first time.

"You should know me, if your memory is good, General Custer," said the captain, in a soft and musical voice, very unlike that in which Buffalo Bill and Dreaming Flower had hitherto heard him speak.

General Custer looked puzzled.

"It seems to me that I have seen you somewhere before, but I can't remember where," he said.

"Don't you remember a certain evening in New York City, two years ago, when there was a ball at a house on Fifth Avenue?"

"Yes."

"You danced five waltzes with me that night, and told me all about your life on the Great Plains."

Amazement, incredulity, and finally a look of conviction succeeded one another on the general's face.

"Great heavens!" he cried. "You are Miss Belle Boyd!"

"Exactly, general."

"Look to the girl!" cried Custer. "She is as white as snow—she is going to faint!"

He ran forward, to support Dreaming Flower, but she waved him back.

"No, no!" she said. "I will be well again in a moment. I loved the Dream Spirit, for I thought he would be my husband."

"I'll be as much like a sister to you as I can, until you find those who are nearer," said Belle Boyd, "and, to make myself more presentable in company, I will try and manufacture some suitable apparel for myself, if they are any dry-goods within reach."

"That's rather an unreasonable demand, Miss Boyd, to make of a party of troopers out on the trail," said General Custer, laughing. "But we will have a tent set up for you and Dreaming Flower."

In the evening, the general visited the tent of the girls, not only to see that proper arrangements had been made for their comfort, but also to find out, if he could, what extraordinary motive had prompted Belle Boyd to leave the fashionable society she had adorned in New York and come out to the Wild West, to masquerade in man's attire, and imperil her life among the Indians.

He was too polite to ask her the question bluntly, contenting himself with courteous suggestions that he might help her to get back East, if she desired to go.

Miss Boyd laughed at him, and said merrily:

"Now confess! You know you are dying of curiosity,

general. You want to know what it all means, don't you?"

"Yes, I confess I do," Custer admitted. "Who wouldn't, under the circumstances?"

"Well, I will tell you; for you are one of the few thoroughly true and brave men I have had the good fortune to meet in my young life. Buffalo Bill is another, and that young Creek Indian, Red Plume, is a third.

"You know what my life was in New York. It was one round of gaiety—all sham and hollowness and insincerity. Unfortunately, I was a great heiress; and fortune-hunters swarmed around me, like flies round a honey-pot. I grew heartily tired of the life, and longed for something nobler and freer.

"Then you came to New York, and I met you at that ball, two years ago. You talked to me about this glorious, brave, open-air life of the West; and I knew that it was just what my heart had vaguely longed for for many years. I thought and thought for months about what you had told me, and at last I made up my mind that I'd leave New York—disappear—and go West.

"I had no one to consider but myself. My father and mother both died when I was a child, and I have no brothers or sisters. The few distant relatives I have only cared for me, as I well knew, for the sake of my money.

"I just cut loose from everything, taking a large sum of ready money with me, and vanished. I expect the mysterious disappearance of Miss Belle Boyd was the topic of a good deal of conversation in New York society. As I am never going back, that doesn't matter.

"I was always something of a tom-boy. I realized that it would be impossible for me to enjoy the kind of life I wanted in the West unless I put on men's clothes, so I did so; and I have played the part of a man, to the best of my ability, up to the time you met me."

"You played it too well for poor Dreaming Flower's peace of mind," said General Custer, nodding his head toward the girl who was sitting at the other end of the tent, wrapped in dreamy thought, sad-faced and wistful, hearing no word of their whispered conversation.

"Yes, I am sorry for that," said Belle Boyd gravely. "But she will soon get over it. Hers is not real love. It is only the worship of an imaginary ideal. She is dreamy, but contact with the world will soon wake her up.

"I have played the part nearly too well for my own safety, too," she went on. "I narrowly escaped being tomahawked by that young Creek, Red Plume, who is very much in love with Dreaming Flower himself. He thought I was his hated rival, and yearned for my scalp, or for suicide, until I told him the truth."

"What do you propose to do now?" was the general's next very pertinent question.

"I really don't know," the girl confessed helplessly.

"I suppose I had better give up masquerading in male clothing."

"It would be best."

"Then what would you advise me to do?"

"If you have really made up your mind never to go to New York or enter your own sphere again, I should think the best thing you could do would be to buy a large ranch somewhere, not too near hostile Indians. You would get all the free life and fresh air you want in that way, and you would not be exposed to the dangers of life on the Great Plains. Why not go to California and buy a ranch there in one of the fairly well settled districts?"

"I will. I confess I have had quite enough of the hostiles. When I lay bound hand and foot in Yellow Bear's camp, waiting to be tortured to death, I own there were moments when I wished myself back in New York."

Miss Belle Boyd followed General Custer's advice. She purchased one of the largest ranches in California, married happily, and lived a peaceful and contented life.

And so she passes out of this story.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAVE OF THE CREEKS.

Wanda, the queen of the Creeks, did not perish in the attack made by the Sioux on the camp of her chief.

She happened to be on the side of the camp farthest from that which they attacked, and, while the brief struggle was going on, she mounted her magnificent horse and fled, as soon as she saw that Yellow Bear, from his side, was doing the same.

Half-a-dozen of the Sioux pursued her, but their horses were far inferior to hers in strength and speed, and she soon shook them off.

She knew that the day was lost. A glance across the plain told her that, and she immediately determined that the only thing to do was to go back to the village, where the scattered warriors of the Creeks who survived the battle would rally. There, too, she hoped to meet with Yellow Bear.

Of all the large war party she had taken away, she was the first to return with the tidings of disaster; and loud were the lamentations of the squaws who rushed out from the lodges to greet her.

Wanda gave them the news, briefly and grimly; stopped their weeping and wailing by an imperious command; and then called around her the few braves who had remained behind to guard the village when the war party rode away.

Some of them she sent to carry the news to the other and smaller villages which owned the sway of Yellow Bear, and to summon the braves who dwelled there to her assistance; the rest she posted at various points to

watch for the return of the warriors who had escaped from the fight, or of the Sioux themselves.

This done, she turned to the women and bade them make all ready for abandoning the village and retreating to the mountains, where, in a secret cave, she thought they would be safe from their enemies.

It was certain, she considered, that the victorious Sioux would attack the village, and she was in no shape to offer any effective resistance to them.

Before long, the Creeks who had participated in the battle, and survived, came straggling back, singly or in two and threes.

Each of them had a tale to tell of comrades slain, and their stories increased the woe of the women, who, one after another, heard of husband, brother, or father killed and scalped. It was one of the greatest disasters that had ever befallen the Creek nation.

Wanda sent scouts far out to watch for the approach of the Sioux, but they were not sighted.

Kicking Horse, after his rescue, had participated in the tail end of the battle, and had then ordered his braves into camp. He had determined to wait for reenforcements before advancing on the Creek villages and dealing the Creek nation a final and crushing blow.

Wanda waited anxiously until nightfall, but Yellow Bear did not appear. She feared that he had fallen, but still hoped against hope. At last she gave the order to leave the village and go to the secret cave in the mountains.

Great care was taken on the journey to hide the trail, and an ample store of dried meat and other provisions was taken along, as the fugitives might have to stand a siege there, in case their retreat was discovered.

The cavern was situated high up in the mountains, and was amply large enough to have accommodated almost the whole of the Creek nation, if necessary. It was of mammoth proportions, and no man, so far as the traditions of the Creeks went, had ever explored its uttermost depths.

It was entered by a narrow, low natural tunnel, entirely masked by creepers and growing vines. This was a place which two or three men could hold against an army, fighting in the Indian fashion; and it constituted the great value of the cave in a situation like the present.

When the tunnel was passed, the cave widened out into a vast hall with a dry sandy floor. The area of this hall was several acres—more than room enough for all the people who entered it after Wanda.

At the farther end, the hall narrowed and ended in a chasm, beyond which it could be dimly seen that the cave continued—how far no man could say. Whether there was any exit at the other end, it was equally impossible to tell. The knowledge of the Indians was limited to the hall at the end of the tunnel.

After all the people had entered, the Amazonian chief-

tainness took a survey of the position with that born ability for leadership which was her distinguishing characteristic.

Her first thought was to send out several of the braves to a mountain brook near-by to bring in a large supply of water, utensils having been brought from the village for that purpose.

Her second idea was that it was necessary to ensure, if possible, some means of retreat, in case the Sioux should find them and decide to sit down at the mouth of the tunnel and starve them out.

By the light of torches she examined the cave, and she determined that the chasm must be bridged and the rest of the cave beyond it explored. There might be an exit that way.

It was too late to carry out this plan that night, but at dawn she sent out warriors to cut down a large tree and shape a plank long enough and strong enough to bridge the abyss, which was about forty feet across.

This was a work of considerable difficulty, but it was child's play compared with the task of getting the plank through the narrow tunnel and then flinging it across the chasm.

Wanda ordered her braves to tie their lariats together strongly and attach the rope thus made to one end of the plank. This was then stood up on end, held by several men, and others took hold of the rope and lowered it until the other end rested on the opposite edge of the abyss.

It made a very narrow bridge, and considerable courage was needed to cross it, for a moment's giddiness or a single misstep would send the hardy adventurer hurtling down into unimaginable depths. But Wanda did not hesitate to set the example.

With a torch in her hand, she advanced firmly and set foot on the plank. She walked across it as steadily as if it were the solid mountainside, and then called for three of her braves to follow her.

There was a pause. No man seemed anxious to be the first to volunteer. The Creek warriors were brave men along the lines in which they had been trained, but this was a new kind of danger, and it appalled them.

But the pause did not last long. An old brave named Broken Arrow, who had distinguished himself in many fights, decided that he would rather die the fearful death the abyss threatened than live with the knowledge that he had been outdone in courage by a woman.

He stepped on the plank and crossed it safely. When he had done so, there was no lack of others willing to follow his example, but, after two had crossed, Wanda called out that she needed no more.

All of the little party had torches, and the chieftainess at once led the way into the pitchy darkness, taking care to throw the light of her torch well in front of her, lest she should fall into another abyss.

The cave alternately widened and narrowed, and the ground was rocky and difficult, but the party pressed on for some distance without finding any sign of an exit.

"It goes straight down to the hell where the earth devils dwell," muttered one of the braves, his well-built form shaking with fear.

Wanda overheard him, and turned upon him savagely. "Fool!" she cried. "Go back, if you are afraid."

But the brave held his ground. To tell the truth, he preferred to stay with the others, rather than to return and face alone the ghosts his superstitious mind feared.

Presently the panic into which he had fallen spread to the others. Mysterious noises of a terrifying kind were heard. They were purely natural in their origin, being similar to the weird sounds in other mammoth caves; but to the Indians, trained in ghost lore from their childhood, they sounded like the voices of angry demons.

Even Wanda at last was glad to yield to the prayers of her men, and return. She reasoned that when it was absolutely necessary to retreat across the plank, if ever, it would be time enough to seek further for an exit.

Probably the moment when Broken Arrow and his fellow braves found themselves safely back among their comrades was the happiest they ever spent in their lives.

On her return, Wanda called a council of war, which was participated in by all the warriors.

"Listen to the words of Wanda, your queen, men of the Creek nation!" she said. "The Great Manitou has veiled his face from us and permitted a great misfortune to fall upon us; but we must not despair."

"In time, when the Creeks from the other villages flock here to our help, we can take the field again and seek for revenge upon the Sioux."

"But, in the meantime, we must hide here, like rats in a hole. Let each warrior suggest that which he thinks it is best to do in this position. The ears of Wanda are open."

Brave after brave got up and made suggestions. One proposed that messengers should be sent to all the other Creek villages to rally the braves there to the cave, another that scouts should be sent out to watch the motions of the Sioux, a third that a watch should be put on the movements of the white soldiers, and so on.

In almost every case they found that Wanda had already anticipated them by doing what they suggested.

"There is one thing that no brave has thought of," said Wanda presently. "You must choose a chief to command you until Yellow Bear returns. But I fear that he will never come back to his people, that his scalp has been taken by the hated Sioux, upon whom Wanda will surely have revenge."

"We want no better leader than Wanda, our queen," said Broken Arrow, and there was a murmur of approval at his words.

"Not so, Broken Arrow," returned the wily chief-

tainess. "That was well when Yellow Bear, my lord, was your chief; but now he is probably dead, and I am of no more account than any other of the many widows in our nation.

"Besides, it is well that a man should lead men. Wanda will give her counsel whenever it seems fitting to her to do so, but she would resign her rule to a man worthy to be chief.

"And who is worthier than Broken Arrow himself, the first man who dared to follow me across that fearful chasm, the hero who has fought in a hundred battles and taken many scalps?"

Broken Arrow swelled with pride at these words, and he began to think that Wanda was an even cleverer woman than he had given her credit for being.

This was precisely the effect she intended to produce on him, for she intended to rule the tribe through him, knowing full well that the warriors would not long tolerate the open domination of a woman, now that her husband, Yellow Bear, was dead.

The election of Broken Arrow was unanimous, and one of his first acts, as the new chief, was to declare that he would always avail himself of Wanda's sage counsel. She knew that her influence over him was complete, and that he would be merely a puppet in her hands.

After the official council, Wanda called Broken Arrow and the one-eyed hag, Evil Eye, into a private consultation.

It had reference to Dreaming Flower, whom Wanda had never loved and now positively hated.

"She is a traitor to the tribe," she said bitterly to her confederates. "She blinded the eyes of Yellow Bear and made him a fool. She set free the paleface prisoner and fled with him, forgetting her duty to the tribe and to Yellow Bear and myself, who had always treated her as our own child.

"It is she who is the real cause of the misfortune of the tribe. But for his love of her, Yellow Bear would not have dispersed all his warriors on the search for the trail, and thus rendered them an easy prey to the Sioux. Is she to be allowed to escape and go back to her own people, the accursed palefaces?"

"Evil Eye would die happy if she could help to torture Dreaming Flower first," croaked the old hag. "She hates her. She has always hated her. She hated her even as a baby, when Yellow Bear brought her to his lodge after a raid on the white settlements.

"She told Yellow Bear that he would do wisely to dash out the brains of the child with his tomahawk, but he cursed Evil Eye and struck her for her words.

"Red and white cannot mix. Evil Eye always knew that ill would come to the tribe through that paleface baby, and it has come."

Having thus delivered herself of a woman's favorite

"I told you so," the ancient crone sat gazing at Wanda with her one baleful eye glowing like a live coal. She waited for the queen's plan, the nature of which she already guessed.

As for Broken Arrow, being a mere man, he could not very well follow the queer logic of the women. He could not see how Dreaming Flower was responsible for all the mischief; he thought that the fault was in the folly and bad generalship of Yellow Bear.

None the less, he was incensed against Dreaming Flower, as were all the braves, for her conduct in setting free the paleface prisoner and quitting the tribe. He was, therefore, quite ready to fall in with any plan for being revenged on her.

"Listen," said Wanda. "I have it from one of the scouts whom I first sent out to watch the Sioux that Dreaming Flower joined the white soldiers who came upon the plain after the fight was over.

"With her were the paleface prisoner whom she set free, Red Plume—another traitor to the tribe—and the great paleface chief, Long Rifle.

"The soldiers pitched camp near the Sioux, and their big chief is having a palaver with Kicking Horse. It probably last several days, and that will delay Kicking Horse attacking us.

"It is well. Our people will come in, and we shall be ready to meet him. In the meantime, let us try to steal Dreaming Flower away from the palefaces and bring her to this cave, where we can sing the death song over her and roast her over a slow fire."

Evil Eye cackled with delight.

"But how is it to be done?" asked Broken Arrow.

"Leave that to Evil Eye. Her heart is in the work, for she has hated Dreaming Flower for seventeen years, and never been able to satisfy her hate. Now she has her chance, and she will make the best of it."

"Evil Eye will know no rest, night or day, until she has the paleface girl in her power," said the savage old hag.

"Send Evil Eye with a few braves to do the work," advised Wanda. "I warrant she will not fail. If the braves can kill Red Plume and capture Long Rifle, so much the better; but the chief thing is to get Dreaming Flower away from the palefaces and wipe out the stain she has put upon the tribe. Let the braves be ordered to obey Evil Eye. Her woman's wits, old as they are, will do more than their craft."

Broken Arrow declared it was a good suggestion, and said he would at once send six warriors off with Evil Eye.

The old hag chuckled with a diabolical joy, for she felt sure that the hatred which had gone on growing with the years would at last be satisfied.

CHAPTER XI.

RED PLUME'S DUEL.

General Custer decided to keep his soldiers for some time encamped on the plain where the battle had been fought, not only for the purpose of impressing the Sioux and holding a palaver with Kicking Horse, but also to enable him to mature plans for a campaign against the Creeks.

He was by no means done with them because they had been defeated by the Sioux. They must be taught to respect the power of the white men also. The hatchet would not be buried, if he could help it, until they had given hostages and other satisfactory guarantees for their good behavior in the future.

On the day after the battle, he sent Miss Belle Boyd away from the camp, with an escort, to stay at Fort Larned until his return there, when he would make arrangements for sending her to California.

He wanted Dreaming Flower to go with her, but the girl refused. She said she would prefer to stay with Long Rifle and Red Plume.

She had conceived a strong dislike to her "Dream Spirit" since she found out that that spirit was a girl.

After Miss Boyd had gone, General Custer called to see Buffalo Bill's party, which now included Dreaming Flower, Red Plume, Nick Wharton, and Wild Bill. He found them all in the girl's tent, talking together over their recent adventures.

After greetings had been exchanged, the general said to Buffalo Bill:

"Of course, as you may suppose, we don't intend to let the Creeks off because the Sioux whipped them. The tribe has shown great hostility to the whites, and the attack on you was only the culminating point. Their power was not broken by their defeat at the hands of the Sioux. We must follow it up.

"But a difficulty has arisen. The scouts who went out to spy on Yellow Bear's village—both our own and those of the Sioux—have come back with the report that the place is utterly deserted.

"All the people have fled—men, women, and children. The trail was followed for some distance, and then lost. It had been most carefully hidden."

Red Plume and Dreaming Flower exchanged significant glances when they heard this. They both knew of the existence and location of the secret cave, and they could guess very well what had happened.

"Kicking Horse, as you may imagine, is very wroth at this," the general went on. "He has by no means satisfied his enmity by this one victory over Yellow Bear. He wants to lay the Creeks out flat, and I don't blame him, for they have been a thorn in the side of the Sioux for years.

"I have persuaded him to wait a few days so that we can have a palaver—one of those interminable affairs in

which the Indians delight. He agreed to this readily, because he wants to get all his warriors together from the various Sioux villages before he attacks the Creeks."

"He will have to catch his hare before he cooks it," remarked Buffalo Bill. "He may attack the other Creek villages, but his particular quarrel is with Yellow Bear's own people, and they seem to have disappeared."

"Yes," said Custer. "I would give something to know where they have gone to. Have you any idea, Red Plume?"

"Red Plume can guess," replied the Indian, "but he will not tell. He has left his people for the sake of Dreaming Flower, but he will not betray them."

General Custer looked at him approvingly.

"You are quite right," he said. "I should not have asked you."

"I dare say Dreaming Flower knows, too," suggested Buffalo Bill.

The girl nodded.

"But I also will not tell," she declared. "I am going back to my own people, but Yellow Bear brought me up as his own child, and his braves have been my friends all my life."

"Will you do this much, Red Plume?" asked Custer. "Will you go to your people, wherever they are, and tell them that I will not seek to inflict any more harm on them if they will give me hostages and pledges for their good behavior toward the whites?"

"Red Plume will do that. He will go at once. But the big chief of the soldiers and the chief of the Sioux must both give him a promise that no man shall follow him, so that the secret hiding-place of his people will not be discovered."

"I will do so, and I will ask Kicking Horse to do the same," said the general.

Buffalo Bill and Dreaming Flower both immediately interposed, pointing out to Custer that if he allowed Red Plume to go he would be sending him to certain death and achieving no good purpose. The Creeks would undoubtedly slay him on sight, if they did not reserve him for a slow death by torture.

Custer at once saw the force of this, and abandoned the idea.

After a few more words, he left the tent, asking Buffalo Bill and the other scouts to assist him as interpreters and advisers during the forthcoming long palaver with the Sioux.

Later in the day, Kicking Horse, accompanied by three of his subchiefs, stalked into the camp of the soldiers and demanded to see General Custer. He was admitted into the bell-tent in which the general was at that moment writing some despatches.

After greetings had been exchanged, Custer sent for Buffalo Bill to interpret. He knew something of the

Sioux and Shoshone tongues himself; but not enough to carry on a long conversation.

When the border king arrived, it was discovered that the business on which Kicking Horse had come was to make a formal demand for the surrender of Red Plume. The Sioux chief had heard that there was a Creek warrior in the camp of the white soldiers, and he thought the man ought to be handed over to him.

Custer, of course, refused the request pointblank; and when it was pressed, he told Kicking Horse that if he wanted Red Plume he would have to come with his braves and take him.

Kicking Horse quivered with anger when he heard this, but he quickly recovered himself and made another proposal.

"If one of my young men should challenge this young Creek to single combat, the big chief of the palefaces would not prevent him from fighting?" he queried.

"Why, no, I don't see how I could very well do that," replied Custer. "I have no authority over Red Plume. He is not one of my men. If he wants to fight, he can do so, for all I care."

This was enough for Kicking Horse. He and the braves with him—the most redoubtable champions of their nation—at once drew lots to see who should have the honor of being the challenger.

Fate decided it in favor of a brawny warrior named Lance Head.

Lance Head at once asked if he could go with Buffalo Bill to see Red Plume and deliver the challenge in person. The border king agreed to take him.

Red Plume, ever faithful to his self-imposed duties, was found on guard outside the tent of Dreaming Flower.

The Sioux went up to him, saluted him courteously, and handed him an arrow painted red, holding the point toward him.

Red Plume accepted it without a word, and handed it back in the same manner. He understood the meaning of the symbol, which was a common form of challenge to mortal combat among the Indians of the plains.

Then the two men began to talk together in Shoshone as pleasantly as if they were not deadly enemies.

Red Plume asked all about the details of the recent battle, which he had not been able to witness, and the Sioux gratified his curiosity.

At last, after a lot of ceremonial palaver, they got down to business, and settled that their duel should take place in half-an-hour on horseback with lances and tomahawks, midway between the camp of the Sioux and that of the soldiers.

As Red Plume had not got a lance with him, the Sioux obligingly borrowed one for him from Kicking Horse.

Red Plume had drawn away some distance from the tent to talk with the Sioux. He did not want Dreaming

Flower to know of the coming fight until it was over, and he begged Buffalo Bill not to tell her.

"If the Sioux should slay Red Plume," he said, "there is something that I want you to tell Dreaming Flower, Long Rifle. You know about the letters written on bark which have been sent to her, telling of love, by some mysterious hand?"

"Yes, she has told me about them."

"It was I who wrote them all. That was the only way in which I could tell her, as I wished to do, about my love."

"But I did not know you could write, Red Plume."

"Nobody knew it. Even Dreaming Flower did not know it. But I was taught by the same paleface captive who taught her, and I learned the written language of love from the letters which he sent her before Yellow Bear killed him. She showed them to me. I made mine as much like them as I could, for they had seemed to give her pleasure."

Buffalo Bill was amazed at this confession. It was utterly unlike anything he had ever known in the Indian character.

Sentiment itself was uncommon enough among the redskins, but the unselfish concealment of so deep an affection was utterly foreign to all he had known of the red man in all his long experience. But Red Plume was an extraordinary Indian, and the more the scout saw of him the more he marveled.

He volunteered to act as Red Plume's second in the duel, and lent the young brave his own horse, as he had none of his own with him.

This was a great proof of the border king's friendship, for he treasured the animal above almost all his other possessions, and he knew very well that it might be killed in the coming encounter.

When Red Plume rode forth, armed and accoutered for the fray, with Buffalo Bill behind him, he found a large and expectant crowd waiting. The news had spread throughout both camps, and all the Sioux and soldiers had turned out to see the fight.

Both men were splendid types of their race. They were finely mounted, and managed their restive horses with an ease and skill that elicited loud applause.

Lance Head was a taller and bigger man than his opponent. He was older, too, and more experienced in warfare. But the young Creek was splendidly supple and muscular, and thoroughly trained in the use of his weapon.

It was arranged by Buffalo Bill and Kicking Horse, who was Lance Head's second, that the two men, at a given signal, should charge at one another with their lances. If the first shot was not immediately fatal, they were free to continue the fight with lance or tomahawk, as they chose.

The signal was given, and the two horses, which had been tightly reined in, rushed together at a terrific speed.

Lance Head aimed his spear at the forehead of his adversary. He was renowned for his skill with the lance, and he thought he could easily hit that small mark. He held the young Creek rather cheap, and wanted to "play to the gallery."

Red Plume took no such chance. He aimed at his adversary's breast, but missed because Lance Head swerved slightly, receiving the point through the fleshy part of his shoulder, while his own lance just grazed the temple of the Creek.

The Sioux at once dropped his spear and seized his tomahawk. Red Plume drew his lance from the flesh of his enemy, but disdained to use it again, although it would have given him a great advantage to do so. He flung it down, and drew his tomahawk also.

Round and round one another the two champions galloped, each hanging down behind the flank of his horse and awaiting a chance to fling the tomahawk with deadly aim.

At last Lance Head thought he saw an opening, and, raising himself up, he flung his hatchet.

At the same instant Red Plume's tomahawk also left his hand, and buried itself in the skull of his enemy, who had missed his aim by less than an inch.

The soldiers cheered wildly, but the Sioux gave vent to loud yells of grief and anger.

At least a score of braves rushed forward and clamored to be allowed to fight the Creek single-handed.

Kicking Horse, however, had a keen sense of fair play. "It must not be," he declared firmly. "The Creek fought our champion and defeated him. He is entitled to his victory. He shall not fight the whole of our war party, one by one. It would not be just."

Red Plume was heartily congratulated on his victory by the soldiers and the scouts, but he made little of it. He had not wanted to fight, and he was not elated by his triumph.

All he wanted to do was to get back to the tent of Dreaming Flower and resume his watch over her. That was the mission in life which he had chosen for himself.

CHAPTER XII.

DREAMING FLOWER'S TERRIBLE AWAKENING.

With a baleful gleam of triumph in her one eye, Evil Eye crept through the tunnel into the secret cave of the Creeks about noon on the third day after her talk with Wanda and Broken Arrow. She was met near the entrance by Wanda, who bore a lighted torch in her hand.

"Have you succeeded?" asked the chieftainess, scanning the old woman's face closely.

"Yes, Evil Eye could not fail in such a task. The dream of her life—the dream of satisfied hatred—is at hand. She watched and waited, as the jaguar watches and waits for its prey. She found the task hard.

"Dreaming Flower was in a tent in the camp of the white soldiers. They had many sentries and kept good watch.

"Red Plume stayed on guard, day and night, outside of Dreaming Flower's tent. But at last he had to sleep, and he went to the tent of Long Rifle.

"Then Evil Eye saw her opportunity. Her braves did not care for the watch of the white soldiers. They could creep past them like snakes in the grass.

"They crawled into the camp and seized Dreaming Flower as she lay asleep in her tent. They brought her out to Evil Eye, who was waiting in the timber near-by."

"But how did they manage to get her past the white sentries?"

"Oh, ho!" chuckled the old hag. "That was easy enough. Two of the braves each crept up behind a white sentry and stabbed him in the back. Then one side of the camp was left unguarded, and they could carry Dreaming Flower safely forth, bound and gagged."

"You have done your work well, Evil Eye. I will reward you richly when the Creeks get back to their villages."

"Evil Eye wants no reward. She has it already. See?"

The hag pointed to the unconscious form of Dreaming Flower, which was at that moment carried into the tunnel by two of the braves, who had followed her, and laid at the feet of Wanda.

The chieftainess bent down and made sure that the white girl was really unconscious, and also that she was bound hand and foot in such a manner that she could not possibly release herself.

"Carry her into the center of the cave," she commanded.

"Is she to die to-night?" Evil Eye demanded eagerly.

Wanda hesitated.

"No," she said finally. "There is no hurry. She shall not die quickly. She shall live many days, and taste the tortures of suspense. I think they must be worse than any agonies of the body, but she shall taste those as well.

"We will torture her day after day. There is no chance that she can escape. The only way out of the cave is by the tunnel, which is always guarded by the sentinel."

"It is well," croaked Evil Eye. "Wanda is wise. Dreaming Flower shall die slowly and fear her coming death day by day."

It was some time before Dreaming Flower recovered from the swoon into which she had fallen during her terrible journey up to the secret cave.

When she opened her eyes and saw that she was in the cave, she realized that her doom was sealed.

By the light of the torches, she saw all around her savage, vindictive faces. All were stern and relentless. There was no gleam of pity in any eye.

Every person there had known her from childhood. Some of the young braves had been her playmates. The

older ones had tossed her on their knee when she was a baby, and to many of the women she had done little acts of kindness. But all this was forgotten.

The Creeks remembered only one thing—that she was a paleface who, brought up among them, had betrayed them by setting free a prisoner and going back to her own people. No doom, in their opinion, could be terrible enough for such an offense.

The poor girl was awakened from her dreaminess to face a terrible reality. In this fearful hour, all thought of her imaginary "Dream Spirit" left her, and her mind was fixed on Red Plume, who in weal and woe had always been her best friend.

If he did not come to her rescue now, she was lost indeed; but how he could help her she could not imagine.

Blows, insults, and abuse were showered upon her, until at last Wanda bade the women, who were indulging in this cruel pastime, cease for the night and let the girl sleep.

There was no hint of mercy in this command. The only motive of the chieftainess was to enable the girl to keep up her strength so that she could feel the more keenly the worse tortures she meant to inflict on her on the morrow, and the following days.

CHAPTER XIII.

RED PLUME SEEKS HIS LOVE.

Red Plume did not discover that Dreaming Flower had been spirited away until dawn on the following morning.

He had been thoroughly worn out by his long and unremitting vigil. When Buffalo Bill persuaded him to take a few hours' sleep, and rely on the white soldiers who guarded the camp, he did not intend to sleep all through the night, but exhausted nature proved too much for him.

With the first streaks of light in the eastern sky, he awoke.

As he got up and left Buffalo Bill's tent, he felt a cold chill of terror at his heart—he knew not why. Somehow the wonderful intuition that true love gives told him that something had happened to Dreaming Flower. Blaming himself bitterly, he hastened to her tent, and called her name.

There was no reply.

He called again, more loudly.

Receiving no answer, he looked inside.

The tent was empty!

Red Plume gave a cry of anguish, for he immediately guessed the truth.

Knowing his people as he did, he was well aware that they would seek vengeance for the act Dreaming Flower had committed.

But he was a man of great moral, as well as physical, courage, and he wasted no time in useless lamentations.

He examined the ground, and saw the prints of the moccasins of the braves who had carried off the girl.

The story was as plain as a book for him to read.

He hastened back to Buffalo Bill's tent, awoke him, and told him what had happened.

"Dreaming Flower is gone!" he exclaimed, when the scout opened his eyes.

"Gone?"

"Yes. My people have carried her away from the tent."

"Impossible!"

"It is true."

"Perhaps she has gone for a walk, or for a swim in the river."

"No. There are moccasin prints around the tent and inside it. She was bound, gagged, and carried off."

Buffalo Bill dressed hastily and went outside with Red Plume. Together they examined the ground.

Wild Bill and Nick Wharton soon joined them.

"How could they have carried her out past the sentries?" asked Hickok.

Almost at the moment he asked this question, it was answered.

The officer of the guard, on his morning rounds, passed by the group and greeted Cody.

"Those Creeks are getting too lively," he remarked. "Do you know what happened last night?"

"No."

"They crept up to our lines and stabbed two of the sentries in the back. There was not the slightest noise or alarm. The dead bodies were found when the relief guard went round."

The scouts exchanged significant glances, and then told the officer how Dreaming Flower had been carried off.

"This beats everything!" the officer said. "Come with me at once to Custer."

When the general heard the story, it was difficult to say whether he was the more amazed or angry. The death of his sentries was a sore blow.

"I'll teach those Creeks a lesson they will not soon forget!" he said.

"But first we must try to rescue the girl," said Buffalo Bill.

"True. And there is no better man for the task than yourself."

"There is a better—Red Plume. But I and my friends will help him."

"Go at once. It will be terrible if the girl is lost again when she has just been found after all these years among the savages. Only yesterday I sent a courier to Fort Larned with despatches, and, among them, was a letter directing inquiries to be set on foot to find her parents, if they are living. How terrible if they should come for

her and be disappointed! Do you think the Creeks will harm her?"

"They will put her to death by the most hideous tortures they can devise," said Buffalo Bill, in a whisper, so that Red Plume should not hear.

Custer turned pale, for the beautiful face of the young girl rose vividly before him.

"Take as many men as you want—anything in the camp," he said.

"Thank you, general; but force will do no good in this case. We must use craft, and we must go at once. Good-by."

The three scouts and Red Plume at once got their horses and started on the trail.

"We need not keep to it," said Red Plume, as soon as they were beyond the confines of the camp. "I know where they have taken her. They will be sure to have hidden the trail, and we should only waste time in looking for it. We will go straight to the hiding-place of my people."

"Where is that?"

"Away up in the mountains, in the secret cave of the Creeks."

"I have heard that there was one, but I thought it was a myth," said Buffalo Bill.

"I know the place. I have been there. It has always been arranged that the tribe should retreat there when in grave danger. As soon as I heard that Yellow Bear's village was deserted, I knew that the people had gone to the cave. That is where they have taken Dreaming Flower."

"Surely they will not harm her, Red Plume," said Buffalo Bill, more to keep up the spirits of his friend than because he believed what he was saying. "She has been brought up among them from babyhood. She is one of them."

The young Creek shook his head sadly, and a grim look came over his face.

"They will torture her to death," he said. "They would do the same for me, if they could catch me. Ah! if only they had me instead of her! Red Plume would gladly die for her sake. Life is worth nothing to him without Dreaming Flower."

They rode on together for some distance, side by side, and then Red Plume remarked:

"Only one thing could have saved her. Yellow Bear would have stood between her and the wrath of the people, if he had lived. He was a great man. There was none in the tribe who dared to stand against him. His word was law. He loved Dreaming Flower in his way as well as I love her in mine. He would not have allowed a hair of her head to be touched."

Buffalo Bill began to be very sorry that he had shot the Creek chief.

"Well, we will do our best to rescue her, Red Plume," he said.

"It will not be easy," the Creek returned. "There is only one entrance to the cave—a narrow tunnel. It is sure to be guarded by sentinels. It leads into a great cavern, in which all the people must be gathered, and in which Dreaming Flower is held captive."

"Perhaps we can intercept the party that stole her before they reach the cave," Buffalo Bill suggested.

The Creek looked doubtful.

"They had too long a start," he said.

"But they will have delayed in order to hide their trail. They would not want the hiding-place of the tribe to be discovered."

"Still they will get there before us."

Buffalo Bill feared so himself, and, when they reached the vicinity of the cave late in the afternoon, they found their fears justified.

The hoof prints of the horses of the braves, who had ridden away with Dreaming Flower, showed a plain trail leading straight up toward the place where Red Plume said the cave was located.

It was obviously useless to try to enter the cave by daylight. No sentries were visible, but, unquestionably at least, one was on guard outside the entrance.

The four men had taken good care not to come within his range of vision, approaching carefully under cover and hiding their horses in some thick timber. They had brought a spare animal for Dreaming Flower, in case they succeeded in rescuing her.

They lay down by their horses to wait until night. Red Plume could not conceal the agony which the delay caused him, and the others were scarcely less impatient, but all knew that nothing was to be done yet.

As soon as darkness fell, Red Plume wanted to approach the cave; but Buffalo Bill restrained him.

"We must wait until they have gone to sleep," he said. "Then we may deal with the sentries and enter the cave. You know that we cannot save her if the braves in the cave are all awake."

Red Plume was obliged to admit this, but every minute of delay caused him the keenest pain, for he could well imagine how Dreaming Flower was being treated.

Not until it was nearly midnight, however, would Buffalo Bill permit him to lead the way.

With infinite caution they approached the mouth of the cave.

When they were within several hundred yards of it, Red Plume whispered to the three scouts to lie hidden in the brushwood, while he crawled forward and despatched the sentry at the mouth of the tunnel.

The young brave had not the slightest compunction about killing one of his old comrades. All he cared about, or thought about, was Dreaming Flower. For her sake, he would have cheerfully annihilated the entire nation of

the Creeks. His love filled his whole heart and mind, to the exclusion of everything else.

Crawling through the brushwood and grass on the hillside as silently as a snake, Red Plume advanced inch by inch toward his prey.

By a supreme effort of the will, he curbed his impatience and brought all the resources of his Indian training to bear upon his difficult task. He knew that a single death yell by the sentry would be fatal to his hopes.

He had even removed all the metal ornaments from his clothes, so that they would not clink; and he had rubbed the blade of the knife which he carried between his teeth with dirt, so that a chance moonbeam might not strike upon it, and reveal him to the sentinel.

Never did any journey seem to him so long. He felt a hardly controllable impulse to leap to his feet and rush upon the man, but he knew that would be folly. He thought that the sentry must hear the anxious beating of his heart, so loud did it seem to him.

At last he came within striking distance, and he had worked his way so cleverly that the sentry had his back to him.

Silently as the man's own figure, he rose behind him, and, with one mighty blow, buried his knife hilt-deep in the back of the man's neck.

Red Plume bent anxiously over him, and saw that he was dead.

With equal caution to that which he had shown before, the young Creek crept into the tunnel. There was no other sentry there. Broken Arrow had considered that one man outside was all that was needed, the entrance being so narrow.

There was no time to delay. Red Plume did not know how soon the dead man's relief might come, and, finding his body, give the alarm.

He, therefore, hastened back to the scouts, and told them to come on. Cody, in the meanwhile, had thoughtfully provided himself with several pine-knot torches from the neighboring timber. These afterward proved to be of great value.

With Red Plume leading the way, the four men passed silently into the tunnel.

All was quiet within the great cave.

Several torches, stuck in crevices in the wall, threw a dim light over the scene.

All the Creeks—men, women, and children—appeared to be fast asleep; but it seemed hardly possible that among all that large number there should not be a single wakeful one.

The intruders knew how lightly Indians slept. The least sound was liable to wake any of the sleeping figures among whom they crept as quietly as if they were ghosts.

It was not easy to discover the recumbent form of Dreaming Flower among so many others, but the eyes of love are keen.

Red Plume found her lying apart from the rest at the farther end of the cave. They had to pass through the whole of the sleeping Creeks before they got to her, and more than one brave stirred uneasily, in spite of their silence and caution.

The young brave was about to bend down and awaken her, when Buffalo Bill caught him by the arm.

Red Plume turned and looked at him inquiringly.

The border king laid his finger on his lips.

Red Plume understood.

If he awakened the girl hastily or incautiously, she might give a cry which would awaken the sleeping Creeks.

He paused uncertainly, and then Buffalo Bill placed his hand over his own mouth.

Red Plume took the hint.

With a sudden motion, he clapped his hand over the sleeping girl's mouth so tightly that she could not utter a sound, however much she might want to do so.

She awoke with a start, and looked at him in terror.

Almost instantly she recognized him, and her momentary look of fear was succeeded by one of ineffable relief and gratitude.

That look repaid Red Plume for all he had dared and suffered in her service, for all his long years of unrewarded devotion.

Buffalo Bill, standing by, laid his finger to his lip.

The girl's eyes showed that she understood.

Then, and then only, Red Plume withdrew his hand from her mouth and cut the thongs that bound her with the knife still wet with the blood of the man he had just slain.

As he helped Dreaming Flower to her feet, he turned, and saw staring at him with demoniacal fury the solitary orb of Evil Eye.

CHAPTER XIV.

CROSSING THE CHASM.

The old hag had been sleeping near to Dreaming Flower, whom she had determined to still watch, lest at the last moment she should be deprived of the joy of satisfying the hatred she had cherished so long.

Some instinct must have told her that her prey was being taken from her grasp, for she awoke at the very moment that Red Plume cut the bonds.

Buffalo Bill leaped upon her instantly, intending to clap his hand over her mouth and then gag her; but he was too late.

A fearful shriek, scarcely human in its maniacal wildness, rang through the vast cavern, and was echoed again and again from the vaulted roof.

Instantly the Creek warriors, accustomed from boyhood to sleep lightly and to wake at the slightest alarm, leaped to their feet and seized their weapons.

Some of them snatched the torches from the walls of the cave and looked to see what was the matter.

The light fell upon the scouts and the released girl, and the truth was plain at once.

With terrible yells, the Creeks came bounding forward, completely cutting off all chance of exit by the tunnel.

Buffalo Bill dropped the limp form of the old witch, whom, in the excitement of the moment, he had handled pretty roughly.

"Back!" he yelled. "Back, and fight it out where the cave narrows!"

There was no time for consideration. It was the only thing to do.

Even Red Plume forgot, for the moment, about the chasm; or he would have tried, at all risks, to cut his way through the mob of Creek warriors.

The scouts knew nothing about it, for Red Plume had made no mention of it when he described the cave to them.

In a moment the cave was full of smoke, for the four men fired again and again with their revolvers as they ran back, killing several of the Creeks.

This caused them to give back for a brief space, and gave the fugitives a chance to reach the very brink of the abyss.

Red Plume was first, supporting Dreaming Flower, while the scouts covered the retreat.

"The chasm!" he gasped, suddenly remembering.

There it was, black and forbidding, at his very feet. His horror was so great that he almost tottered over the brink.

Dreaming Flower saw it, too, and instantly swooned in his arms.

At that moment the light of the torch carried by the nearest Creek brave fell upon the plank bridge which had been thrown across by Wanda's orders.

Without an instant's hesitation, Red Plume set foot upon it, bearing Dreaming Flower in his arms.

To walk that spider's bridge alone was hard and perilous enough. To cross it bearing another seemed an impossible feat, but Red Plume did it. He tottered and swayed in his efforts to keep his balance, yet somehow he got across.

As he was crossing, the three scouts were putting up a desperate fight at the end of the plank.

Their deadly revolvers kept the Creeks at a little distance, and, as soon as Red Plume had got across and vanished into the darkness on the other side, Nick Wharton and Wild Bill in turn passed over, in obedience to Cody's shouted instructions.

The king of the scouts himself was the last man to cover the retreat.

Broken Arrow rushed up to the brink of the abyss just as he turned to join his comrades.

As Buffalo Bill was crossing the narrow plank, the chief of the Creeks chopped frantically at it with his sharp-edged tomahawk.

The border king turned and fired at him.

Broken Arrow reeled and fell, shot through the brain.

But he had done his work—or nearly done it; for Cody felt the plank crack under him as he literally raced across it.

Hardly had he left it and put his foot in safety on the solid rock, when Evil Eye, mad with rage at the escape of Dreaming Flower, strove to follow him.

Midway across, the plank snapped at the point where Broken Arrow had chopped at it, and, with an ear-piercing shriek, the one-eyed hag went down into the bottomless depths.

The Creeks fired volleys of arrows and bullets over the chasm at the fugitives, but they were back in the darkness and lying flat on their faces, so that they suffered no hurt.

At last Wanda ordered her braves to save their ammunition. Their enemies, she said, must surely perish of hunger and thirst; for they were cut off from all retreat.

So, indeed, it seemed at first to most of the fugitives themselves. They appeared to have merely exchanged a quick death for a lingering one.

But the word "despair" was unknown in Buffalo Bill's lexicon. As soon as the firing ceased, he led the little party some distance back in the cave, and then lighted one of his pine-knot torches.

"Now we will look for a way out," he said cheerfully. "It is useless," said Red Plume, gloom written upon his face. "I have only brought Dreaming Flower here to perish miserably. There is no way out save by the tunnel. We had better kill ourselves and make a quick end, rather than wait until we die of hunger and thirst."

"Where has your courage gone, Red Plume?" cried the king of the scouts. "Never say die! Why is the air so fresh? It is fresher here than in the big hall. It seems to get fresher as we go along."

This was true, and it gave renewed hope to all the party.

Stumbling over the uneven ground, they pushed onward, and at last found that the cavern took a sharp turn to the left and narrowed to a mere tunnel.

They followed this for over a mile, and then Buffalo Bill, who was leading the way, gave a loud shout of joy.

"What's the matter?" asked Wild Bill.

"Look! A star! The open heaven! There is the opening!"

It was true. A star glimmered straight ahead of them, and, in a few minutes, they were out of the tunnel and standing on the mountainside.

With gratitude unspeakable, they rolled in the grass and smelled the fresh, green turf, which in their hearts they had never expected to see again, much as they had tried to keep up one another's spirits.

In a few moments they sobered down and held a council as to what was to be done next. Should they try to make their way on foot to General Custer's camp, or should they try to get the horses which had been left in the timber near to the other entrance of the cave?

The latter course was decided on, as it was thought that the Creeks would certainly never be looking for them there.

Buffalo Bill and Red Plume undertook the task of fetching the horses, so that the danger would be minimized, and they carried it out successfully.

Custer's camp was reached in safety, and the tale of the adventures in the cave excited the marvel of all who heard it.

Dreaming Flower was sent, with an escort, to Fort Larned, and her faithful squire, Red Plume, of course, accompanied her.

Custer took measures to ensure that the secret of the cave should not reach the Sioux. Guided by Buffalo Bill, he rode to it with a picked force of troopers on the following night, but only to find the birds flown.

Wanda had taken no chances on there being another exit. She had at once sought a fresh hiding-place, with all her people.

But the search of both the soldiers and the Sioux was unremitting and relentless. In time they hunted the Creeks down, inflicting heavy losses on them and forcing the remnant of the tribe to sue for peace and give ample guarantees for their future good behavior.

Wanda was among those who fell in the last engagement. With her death, the resistance collapsed.

Soon after he returned to Fort Larned, General Custer was informed, while writing in his orderly room, that a gentleman had ridden up to the fort and wished to see him.

He looked at the card which was handed to him, and read: "Edward Benoist."

"The name on the picture!" exclaimed Cody. "It is Dreaming Flower's father!"

He rushed excitedly to the quarters of a married officer, with whose wife Dreaming Flower had found a temporary home, and told the girl to give him the morocco leather cases with the miniatures.

Almost snatching them from her hands, he hurried to the room where Mr. Benoist was waiting for him.

Custer wasted no time in introductions.

"Do you know these, sir?" he demanded, thrusting the cases into his visitor's hands.

Trembling like a leaf, Mr. Benoist—an elderly, distinguished-looking man—opened them.

"Heavens! My wife—my child!" he cried, and then fell in a dead faint on the floor.

When he recovered, he told General Custer that the pictures had been in the bosom of his wife's dress when, seventeen years before, she was slain by the Creeks in an attack on a trading post. Her baby was there with her, and it was not found among the bodies after the raid.

What had become of the child, he had not even been able to guess, until he heard of the search for the relatives of Dreaming Flower which Custer had put on foot.

The general at once took Mr. Benoist to his daughter, and, when he embraced her, she wept for the first time since her childhood, for she had been given a training which made her regard tears as despicable weakness. Yet she wept now, not knowing why she wept, for nature spoke within her.

Red Plume, who, faithful as ever, was by her side, looked on at the meeting with mingled pleasure and pain. Then, unnoticed by Dreaming Flower, he slipped out of the room.

Buffalo Bill met him outside.

"What is the matter with Red Plume?" asked Buffalo Bill, for he saw that the young brave's eyes were downcast and his breast was heaving with emotion that could hardly be suppressed.

"Red Plume is sick. His heart is heavy as lead. He used to have a hold on the heart of Dreaming Flower. He learned in secret from her teacher how to write on the speaking papers, so that he could tell her, when she knew it not, that he loved her. And he would watch the color come and go as she read, and happy thoughts danced in her eyes. That time has gone. She has found her kindred. She does not want Red Plume near her. He will go back to the mountains—and die!"

"No! He will go back and live, like the true-hearted warrior that he is. Old scores are forgotten. Those who hated him are dead—or nearly all. His people, shattered and broken, need him. Red Plume will go back to them, make his peace, and work to build up the Creek nation."

The young brave's eyes shone with a new hope.

"Red Plume will go. It may be to the torture stake, but what matters? He will go."

Without another word, he shook Cody's hand and went to saddle his horse, leaving Dreaming Flower without a word of adieu, which he felt he could not bear.

After some time, he succeeded in making his peace with his people; and eventually he rose to be paramount chief of the Creek nation, and was married happily to a beautiful woman of his own race.

As for Dreaming Flower—now Miss Cecile Benoist—a brilliant social career opened out before her, her father being a man of great wealth. She married a distinguished foreigner and saw much of that great world which Belle Boyd had told her about when they were

both hiding in the cave by the waterfall from the vengeance of the Creeks.

But amid it all she often longed, as Belle Boyd herself had done, for the free life and fresh air of the mountains and the prairies.

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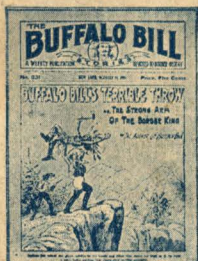
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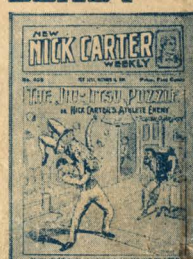
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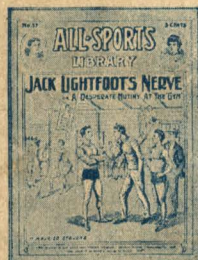
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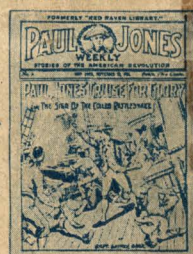
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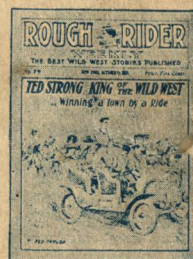
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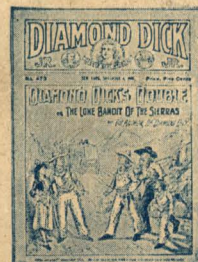
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